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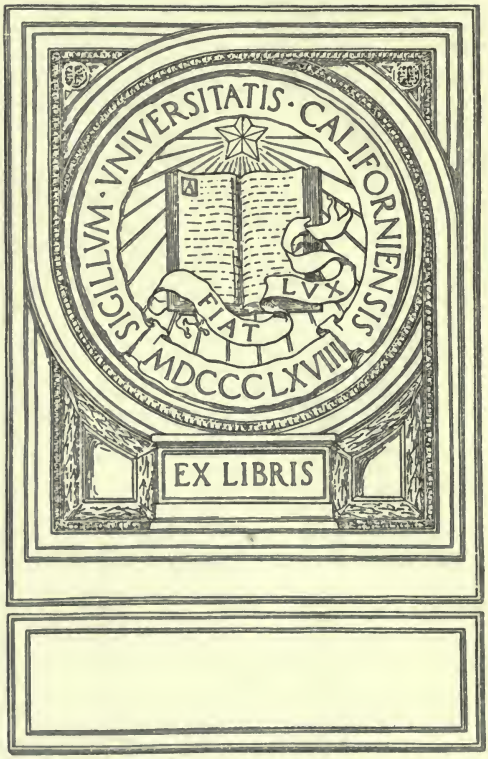
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TREE USED AS BELFRY IN SALONICA

# WITH THE SERBS IN MACEDONIA

## BY DOUGLAS WALSHE

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PHYLLIS,

I am sorry this is not a better book, and that it is a Day behind the Fair. But such as it is, it is yours.

M134131

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# SALONICA

## THE TRAVELLER*

M2/IX98375 PTE. SMITH, DAVID, OF 708 M.T. COY. (FORD) WITH THE ROYAL SERBIAN ARMY, HOLDS FORTH :

SPEAK as you find's my motter ; so I 'asten to admit
I'm one as 'as touched lucky in a-doing of my bit.
When you think about the trenches, an' the 'and-grenades and gore,
It isn't none so dusty in the Army Service Corps.
It's true there's times when I feel sick I can't get 'ome to tea
With the missus in the kitchen and the nipper on my knee,
But there, you can't 'ave ev'rything ; and my old gal don't fret,
Between ourselves, she's raking in twice what she used to get !

I freely own I've got no moan—why, though I paid no fare,
I've 'ad me Meditraynean cruise like any millionaire !
I've 'ad a squint at furrin parts, and 'eard 'em talking Greek,
Yes, me, wot makes when I'm in work a bare two quid a week !
I've seen the sheep graze with the goats like what the Bible tells ;
I've seen the stones that look like bread, and sniffed some hefty smells ;

* Reprinted from the *Cornhill Magazine.*

I've seen the mountains purple, and the skies like Reckitt's
blue ;
And watched the natives *milk their sheep*, so 'elp me,
mates, that's true !

Oh yes, I've been about a bit in my old bedstead bus,
While working for the Serbians (and 'ere's to them and us !)
I've got about a bit, I say, and seen some rummy sights,
An' slep' with a mosquito net acrost my face at nights.
I've seen the oxen threshing corn same as the scripshers sez,
An' peeped be'ind a woman's veil, and pinched a Turko's
fez ;
But of all the sights that I 'ave seen (and I 'ave seen a 'ost)
A little baby's fun'ril was the one that knocked me most !

Oh, talk about the " midst of life," it give me quite a shock !
It 'adn't got no cawfin, and it wore a coloured frock !
All sudden-like I saw it coming down the village street,
The farver with it in 'is arms—all stiff and small and sweet !
The priest and fam'ly follered in a single straggling line,
The pore distracted mother with a jar of bread and wine,
In case it woke up 'ungry on the Resurrection Day—
I couldn't arst, not talking Greek, but that, thinks I's the
lay !

At first I thought of sloping ; then I says, " No, see it
through ;
It never ain't no 'arm to know what other nations do ! "
The priest, 'e was a rum old bird—they tell me " Pope's "
'is style—
'E wore a long black cassock and a funny old black tile.
I couldn't twig 'is foreign talk beside the little grave ;
But I see 'ow 'ard the mother was a-trying to be brave,
And 'fore they put the baby in, with straw she made a nest,
And then she took 'er nipper, and she laid it down to rest !

Well, as I say, I've seen a lot, but that sight 'as me beat,
That Macedonian kiddie being carried through the street—
The little grave among the 'ills, the nest, the foreign grub—
The only sight I've seen out 'ere that's made me want to
blub!
You see, I thought of my own kid and my old gal as well,
'Bout 'alf the world away from me, and Life is such a sell,
You never know, and kids is kids, I've seen enough for me,
The sooner I get 'ome again, the better pleased I'll be!

# CHAPTER I

## GOING OVERSEAS

On June 14th, 1916, at Bulford Camp on Salisbury Plain, the War Office went into labour and brought forth 708 Company M.T., A.S.C. Part of the life history of that mouse, technically a Light Supply and Ammunition Column of Ford vans attached to the Serbian Army, will be found in the following pages. You are warned, however, at the start, that it is only a small-beer chronicle. Here, as far as our men are concerned, there are no records of days and nights in waterlogged trenches under concentrated shell-fire, and no pulse-stirring descriptions of hand-to-hand encounters and bayonet charges. We never fired a shot at anything more exciting than a petrol tin for revolver practice, or a wild goose or duck for a dinner that usually remained in the air.

But we did our job, and we saw a little of the Balkans. Mainly married and mostly of inferior physique, we "carried on"—when there was any carrying on to be done. In between those

long spells of idleness that seem inseparable from the silly business of war, our men knew a certain amount of danger, difficulty, and discomfort, and faced death from aeroplane, accident, and disease. However, one may as well begin a little nearer to the beginning.

706, 707, 708, and 709 M.T. Companies were specially devised to carry supplies and ammunition for the Serbians in the almost railless, roadless Balkans. The idea was that heavy lorries would work from the railhead, as far as the roads were practicable for such vehicles. From that point, Ford vans would carry on, using tracks and passes impossible for the "heavies." Rail and road makers and menders, of course, were to get busy while the armies fought, and so, step by step, everybody was to journey to Belgrade. That was the idea—but in practice things worked out a little differently.

To begin with, there was a difficulty about control, which was finally settled, as the Serbs had no motor transport of their own, by what was known as the Serbian M.T. Units being placed under the British Director of Supplies and Transport, General Arthur Long. In other words, British transport was to work for the Serbians under the direction of the French—a situation bristling with possibilities of discord. It is gratifying, however, to be able to record

that, thanks to the tact and loyalty of all concerned, there was practically no discord. That point having been settled, the next trouble that arose was carrying capacity. It was discovered that, though everybody had expected the roads to be bad, they were much worse than anybody had imagined. In the beginning of the 1916 advance, when things were at their worst, road conditions, indeed, were such that it seemed impossible for motor transport to cope with them. The first company actually to work for the Serbians was 605—a composite concern, consisting of heavy lorries and Fords, which originally started with the British Adriatic Mission and later worked with the British Mission at Corfu. The other "heavies" were 688 and 689 M.T. Companies of three-ton Albions, whose possible load in those days was seldom more than a ton and a half. And the Ford Companies—706, 707, 708, and 709, consisting each of one hundred and thirty vans for transport purposes—found themselves capable of carrying a load of only five hundredweights instead of the half-ton which had been expected of them.

This led, in 1917, to their being reinforced by four more companies, but by that time most of the strain was over, and the roads were considerably improved.

The birth of a unit begins with G. 1098. It looked innocent enough when we saw it first—a nicely stitched buff folder of seventeen pages, with all our wants neatly set out in columns with instructions as to where they were to be drawn. But wisdom and wrath soon came.

G. 1098 is the Mobilization Store Table, in which are laid down the personnel, transport, equipment, and stores that each unit is entitled to. It is the War Office Bible and the O.C.'s curse. No G. 1098 for any unit ever yet gave rise to anything but bad language.

Nice, clean, white-souled subalterns are turned into shameless thieves and conspirators by G. 1098. O.C.'s take things "on charge," and pray fervently that before they "hand over" they may endure a fire or a retreat. Mons wasn't all sorrow, and Gallipoli had its consolations.

The whole business resolves itself into a duel between you and the W.O. They want to send you away with as little as possible—that's how they get their K.C.B.'s—and you naturally desire to be on the safe side with twice as much as you are likely to require.

We got what we could from Ordnance. Ordnance provides everything that is necessary for the maintenance of an army in the field with the exception of certain technical stores;

and Ordnance is, was, and ever will be—Ordnance. It knows only the gospel according to G. 1098.

Our experience was that they believed in their System above all things. System, of course, is necessary, and a certain amount of Red Tape is necessary; but even with a system one ought to remember that there is a war on. The business of Ordnance was not conducted by the hour, day, or job to suit the convenience of customers. Every day, war or no war, they closed from twelve to two. On one occasion we were expecting to embark on the morrow, the officer-in-charge of Workshops was up to his eyes in work, and had come forty miles to see them. He arrived at two minutes to twelve. But they couldn't interfere with their System for him. It was impossible that any of their men should be kept five minutes from their dinners. Either he must wait till two, or go away without his stores; and, as he absolutely could not wait, the latter had it. Of course, we didn't embark on the morrow after all, so he made another forty-mile journey at the taxpayers' expense.

This, however, was all in the day's work. One expects that sort of thing in the Army, and that is the sort of thing the Army never disappoints one in.

While the business of drawing stores and equipment was proceeding, men were being drafted to us in driblets to complete our strength. England was shaking herself awake, and methods were necessarily rough and ready. We were entitled to so many men, and we got them on the instalment system. But it was hardly a happy time for the O.C. He had to form this crowd, of whom he knew nothing, into a unit, and to make some of them N.C.O.'s, clerks, cooks, and batmen. If there weren't any clerks or cooks among them, the War Office didn't mind. That was the O.C.'s funeral. He had the number of men laid down in G. 1098.

Nobody knew anything about anybody or anything, but everybody meant business, and so things got done. The Depot authorities helped us all they could, and it is to be hoped that some day the excellent work done at Bulford during this period will receive its proper recognition. The O.C. interviewed his men, and scattered stripes around. The company sergeant-major began to break the company into their drill. The men who couldn't drive a Ford were taken out and taught—and the subalterns went about with both eyes skinned, looking for likely batmen. They were very green subalterns, fresh from an O.T.C.,

still a little nervous of their voices on parade, and very touchy about the colour of their Sam Brownes. But they knew enough to know that a great deal depended on getting hold of a good, trustworthy soldier servant.

Gradually the Company was pulled into shape—A.S.C. shape—and little by little our vehicles began to arrive. It was a great day when we found that we owned fifteen Ford vans, exactly the same as those which take the washing and the groceries home. That night we doubled our sentries. More came later, and all were duly ornamented with the Company's sign—a red horse-shoe with white nails. Of course it went on first upside down, so that the luck would all run out, and had to be done over again. But that was merely in accordance with Army tradition.

All this time we were desperately anxious to be off, kicking our heels and cussing "Henry" because he wouldn't deliver our vans. Two other companies were already out—706 and 707—and one, 605, was actually at work. Day by day we scanned the papers for any mention of Serbia. What were the Serbians doing? and what would our job really be like? were the burning questions of the hour. Should we have an exciting time with the Bulgarian Comitadji among the hills, or should we merely

be Pickfords and Carter Patersons as a lot of the M.T. were in France? Nobody knew; nobody knew anything. All we heard was mainly wrong and a demand by the O.C. for spare springs to combat the bad roads out there was laughed to scorn. So was a request for spare ball-races. G. 1098, as usual, was thrown in our faces, and later on we were absolutely hung up for both these articles. But this sort of thing must happen, so let it pass. It is easy to criticize and be wise after the event, as easy as it is to make game of the W.O. Let us be charitable and assume that there is a deeper wisdom underlying these things than the mere civilian brain can fathom.

One day a most exciting order came through. Two subalterns and a hundred men were to sail for Salonica at once to complete the complement of a transport. That looked like business, and on the day we parted from these comrades we ourselves journeyed with all our vehicles to Bath.

That looked even more like business. Bath was on the way to Avonmouth, the port whence all M.T. vehicles for Salonica were shipped. We were on the point of starting, said the sanguine, and applications for week-end leave to say good-bye poured into the company office.

We little knew.

"Henrys" have lots of ways of their own, and many and bitter have been our experiences of the tricks they can play. They are wonderful vehicles—they go where no other car can go, and can do what no other car can do; but their front-axles and their steering torque-rods bend rather easily. A Ford with a bent front-axle, and a fool or a novice at the wheel, can knock spots off a bull in a china shop, as we were destined to discover.

Passing through Bath to our camping-ground in the park, we had to make a sharp turn, and the driver of one vehicle, travelling too fast, struck the opposite kerb a rather sharp blow. He didn't "shut down," as he should have done, and the car waltzed merrily away to the other side of the road. Then it came back again, mounted the pavement, and crashed into a huge sheet of plate glass on one side of a draper's doorway. Not content with that, it ricochetted across the doorway, and shivered another sheet of glass on the other side, coming to rest in the window itself with various intimate feminine garments suspended on its mud-guards. A blushing subaltern, at the stern call of duty, was obliged to inspect the damage done, and some of the injured garments exhibited by the lady assistants were very intimate indeed.

Altogether that Ford did more than its own value of damage on its first day out, and incidentally the reader may be interested to observe the sort of drivers some of our men then were. This particular M.T. man had had only three days' instruction before being passed as efficient! A curious little detail was that some of the pieces of falling glass had cut clean through thirty or forty thicknesses of a bolt of calico.

The foregoing incident brings another back to memory that occurred a few days later. Another officer was convoying a batch of new cars from Bulford to our camp, and in a collision one van was knocked down a bank and turned turtle. There was a sickening noise of smashing glass, splintering wood, and dinting tin. Fearing the worst, the wreck was approached and the driver discovered unable to move without assistance.

He raised a blood-stained face to his officer.

"Shall oi 'ave to pay for ut?" he asked anxiously.

Days passed and vehicles were sent on in advance till we had only forty left, and then came an order to move. It was duly cancelled, and then repeated; and despite previous disappointments we decided that we must really be off at last. Good-byes were said all over

again. Cases were made for the gramophone, its trumpet and records, and labelled "Office Stores"; and the men who had been out in hot countries before made money by folding puggarees round the topees of the uninitiated.

At the Rest Camp at the docks we found a further order awaiting us. All our vehicles and most of our stores were to be sent off the very next day. Great was our joy, and Workshops and all his men embarked with a mixed cargo that included the remainder of our vehicles, a couple of thousand tons of H.E. and a howitzer battery—in a tramp that did nine knots when pushed.

They made the trip without an escort—and arrived!

We stood by for what seemed an interminable period, and it was then that there occurred one of those incidents which will linger in the memory long after the rest of the campaign is forgotten.

A certain private damaged his artificial dentures—argot, broke his teeth.

Tremendous issues were immediately raised. Was it a genuine accident, or was it done with intent to avoid embarkation overseas?

The culprit, or victim, declared that he had dropped them out of his mouth in the latrines. I am sorry, but this is a military history, and

in the Army that is where everything happens. Whenever you want a man, that's where he is. If he's late on parade or parades unshaven—that's why.

Evidence there was none, except that of the victim, or culprit. To make a new set would mean that he must be left behind, and he claimed that he was entitled to a new set at the public expense and objected to a mere repair. Like his officers, he didn't see why he shouldn't get all he could out of the Army.

The matter was settled by arbitrarily sending the man and the dentures into Bristol under escort. There a dentist at first demanded a guinea to mend them, was apprised of the facts, and agreed to do it for five shillings, and finally, when the moment of settling came, accepted half a crown!

He made a most excellent repair of them, and the man himself made a most excellent soldier. He was, indeed, one of the best men in the Company.

This excitement over, we really did embark on August 27th. There weren't very many of us. Most of the Company had gone before, but the O.C. and two subalterns and the men who were left had a very pleasant passage out in a well-known Mediterranean cruising yacht, the *Arcadian*, belonging to the R.M.S.P., then

turned into one of H.M. transports. She went to the bottom later. Her well-fitted cabins, luxurious saloons and swimming-bath that had echoed in their day to the laughter of pretty women, and the good-humoured, bad language of rough soldiers, finally fell victim to Fritz; and when we heard that she had gone down we thought of our enjoyable journey and felt that we had lost a friend.

The ship was packed with troops, and the first two days were rather nasty. It was the writer's bad luck to be called upon for orderly officer, and the first inspection is better omitted than described. Apparently the ship's cooks were rather stale humorists. The food was excellent, but for the men's first breakfast they provided curry—greenery-yellowy curry with chunks of fat.

Lifebelts were worn all the time, and boat stations allotted to all the men. The officers had no boat stations, however. Any old odd raft was supposed to be good enough for them.

An escort travelled with us, and of course we had a gun of our own, and a military armed guard always on duty. At night all lights were extinguished, and it was a serious crime to smoke on deck.

One lovely night when, because of the heat, most of the men were sleeping on deck and it

was difficult to move without treading on them, it was the writer's turn as orderly officer again.

Suddenly the voice of the orderly sergeant was heard :

" Turn them there wrist watches over," he shouted. " Come on, there ! Turn them there wrist watches over ! "

Such is zeal. He feared that the illumination from the dials of the wrist watches of the men lying on deck would shine through the bulwarks or up into the sky and give away our whereabouts to a prowling submarine.

" 'Urry up, there. I shan't tell you again ! " he threatened. " Turn 'em face downwards, or you'll be ' for it ' in the morning."

That slipping through the Mediterranean with all lights out, and pursuing a zigzag course, while now and then our escort winked a few words of command or counsel, was rather thrilling. But our luck was good. We ran over some wreckage one night in the dark, we " had the wind up " all the while, and were tested with several false alarms, but we reached Malta without seeing a periscope.

To our joy, officers were allowed to land, and we learned that we should be kept there for some time as enemy submarines were very active at the moment. So we did Malta very

thoroughly, which, of course, is only another way of saying that Malta did us—or tried to.

Malta, to a passer-by, is the sort of place that somehow or other leaves a nasty taste in the mouth. Like its inhabitants, it is very yellow and bright when the sun shines, but the people are not nice, and the spuriousness of its curios and the rapacity of its shopkeepers are obvious and irritating. Generalities, however, based on a three days' visit are rather too insular, so let me say merely that we had a quite amusing time there and some very bad dinners.

The life and soul of our party was a solicitor subaltern of ours. Watson, bargaining in an hotel with a lace-vendor for things he never intended to buy, reduced us to tears. He even made the Maltese laugh, and solaced his feelings with half a crown when we bade him farewell. But Watson's greatest stunt was next day when we hired a car and drove round the island. After an excellent tea at an hotel by the water's edge, where we wasted many pennies on the diving boys, Watson had an inspiration during the return journey. Maltese peasants going home after the day's work found themselves saluted by four subalterns, who solemnly raised their helmets in their best Regent Street manner. The effect was delicious. Off came the peasants' hats in response, and every one

of them turned and stared after these astonishingly polite "Ingleeze." Possibly it was conduct unbecoming to temporary officers and gentlemen, and we all ought to have known better. But we enjoyed it very much, as, indeed, we enjoyed all such teapot jokes during the campaign.

That is one of the curiosities of soldiering, in the A.S.C. or anywhere else. One's mind simplifies, and one's speech coarsens. Heaven knows there is precious little in war that is good for either man or beast. Self-deceivers, shameless liars, and ignorant fools may spout the old stock phrases about war being the ultimate test of a nation's manhood, or prate of its ennobling, purging influence on a nation's soul. But war is bad and bestial and insane. The best go under, and the brute comes out. It is not good for any man to mangle flesh, or slither in his fellow's blood. To live in a hell of fire and fear and slaughter makes nobody a better man.

If war could be Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark, if there could be no bloodshed in it, then perhaps some of these things might be true. Speaking generally, the soldier out of the firing line is a delightful, different creature. For some reason man seems at his best when he herds for a while with his fellow men without

women—but heavens, what treason is this? For goodness' sake, let us get back to our buffoonery with the Maltese before we get deeper in the mire.

You should have seen Watson pay the Maltese boatmen who rowed us back to the ship their exact fare—a thing that had never happened to them before—and you should have seen the Maltese boatmen. Shocked and speechless, they watched him ascend the gangway, and never smiled again, till he came back and mended their broken hearts with a solatium doled out penny by penny.

That evening four subalterns found that they had the ship to themselves. The "O.C. Troops" and all the other big-wigs were ashore. So we gave a gramophone concert to the men, who were not allowed to land, poor wretches, and the crew.

It was rather wicked of us. A lovely Mediterranean night, hot, starry, and still; gleams of phosphorus in the water, lanterns twinkling all around as the gondolas plied to and fro—and a gramophone concert with rag-time choruses roared into that warm, peaceful darkness! But the audience enjoyed it very much and so—alas, that it must be confessed—did we!

Two days later we arrived at Salonica and were naturally very interested to observe the

remains of the *Norseman* just outside. Her forepart was sticking up in the air and her stern was entirely submerged. She looked oddly pathetic and exciting, as a big wreck always does. Tugs and lighters were tinkering around her; but two years later she was still unsalved, and her forepart was still intact, with people living aboard her, and washing hung out to dry.

The most interesting thing about her, however, is that she was not torpedoed by a submarine as every one believed at the time. She sank through striking an old Turkish mine sown during the Balkan War. Several others were swept up in the Gulf, some coated six inches thick with barnacles, but as deadly as ever. Incidentally, this opens a somewhat unpleasant prospect for the future. It is an impossible hope that all the mines sown by all the belligerents should be swept up, or become "safe," as laid down by the Hague Convention. Here and there a few will escape, and some unlucky skipper will encounter his last peril of the sea, and the *Daily Mail* will demand somebody's head, and a few more women will weep.

THE FAMOUS WHITE TOWER OF SALONICA, AND THE FIRST BIG BATCH OF BULGARS CAPTURED BY THE GREEKS

A QUAINT NOTICE

## CHAPTER II

### A CALAMITOUS CITY

SALONICA — that two-thousand-year-old city whose finger had been in so many historical pies—how we stared as our ship slowly warped her way to the quay!

It took one's breath away right from the start. What with the English, French, Russians, Serbs, and Italians and its own population of Greeks, Turks, Spanish-Jews, and various brands of Macedonians, stale though the image is, Salonica was remarkably like an old-fashioned kaleidoscope, of which most of the little bits of coloured glass were very faded and dirty.

Soldiers black, brown, and white, Ali Baba, with many, many more than forty thieves, Cassim and his donkey (poor beast), Fatima, Haroun al Raschid, and Shylock, they were all in these malodorous, crowded streets. And the women! Women of all kinds—fat, slim, veiled, and unveiled; shapeless bundles of rags and dirt; elegantly gowned figures with picture hats; women barefooted, high-heeled

—absurdly high-heeled—or in clogs; women plain, pretty, painted. Salonica was a wonderful hotchpotch then, a hell of debauchery, heat, and confusion. Later it altered a little—the authorities quieted things down—and later still, of course, there came the fire.

But then it fascinated and appalled. One loved it and hated it at the same time. If towns were "she's" like ships, this is the sort of woman Salonica was. Impossible—and yet one goes back. And now she lies stricken—the heart of her in ashes and half her people homeless, and most of her Reconstruction still before her, and an English architect dreaming a wonderful dream about her.

As one came to know Salonica better, one realized that it was everything from the East to the East End, from Mayfair to Montmartre and Piccadilly. Romance looked on with patient eyes at bare-faced robbery in the shops; and camels got in the way of motor-lorries in the streets. It was a breathless city in every sense; restless and overcrowded, and its heat and its smells were unbearable—like the Provost-Marshals. While you were wondering if the slender Turkish lady who was passing was a Moon of Delight or a skinny old hag, an A.P.M. would tap you on the shoulder and sneer at your slacks or shoes!

Its contrasts were too violent. To give an impression of Salonica as it was then, one must splash the paint about anyhow. The scum of the earth jostled the Flower of Chivalry on the pavement. Staff officers were three a penny. Half the French Army and all the British ate ices or drank long drinks at Floca's. Everybody went to Floca's, chief of the cafés of the Place de la Liberté, the centre of the town, just as every one dined at the rebuilt Hôtel Splendide, now sadly in need of yet another rebuilding. This, of course, was before the days of the French Cercle Militaire, one of the few places important to us that escaped the fire. The Cercle Militaire is a military restaurant, built and staffed by French soldiers, very neat in design and very clean and cheap and good. Everybody agreed that it was the best thing the French had done in the Balkans. There any officer could get a good dinner at a low price, instead of a bad dinner at a disgracefully inflated one. And we all took our hats off to our gallant thrifty Ally for thinking of such a thing.

Sitting at one of Floca's little outside tables, one could "sense" Salonica, as the lady novelists have it, "glimpsing" the blue, blue sea and the quaintly coloured caïques that brought wine and wood from the Greek Islands ;

and Venizelos Street, where one could buy most things of inferior quality at treble their value.

But always the thing that struck one was the muddle and mystery of it all. Rolls-Royces ran into donkeys. Turks spat furtively on infidel enemy shadows. The dervishes danced in their mosque ; the Greek Orthodox Church cast a silver cross in the sea ; Moslems fasted from Ramesan to Bairam, neither eating nor drinking till the sun went down ; and harlots made fortunes.

Warships and transports came and went ; hospitals rose all over the place and hospital ships were moored in the bay. Evidently there was a war on somewhere, because of all these soldiers in the town, and all these ships in the harbour. But the War did not seem to have much to do with Salonica, busy but unconcerned. Now and then came aeroplanes to ram things home, taking at times a dreadful toll of military and civilians alike. But Green was close by, and that indomitable aviator and his merry men soon broke up the enemy's special bombing squadron, and Salonica went on making hay while the sun shone—the most expensive hay that was ever made.

Beyond question it was, is, and always will be a curious city, inhabited by curious people. With the blue water below and the blue sky

above, Salonica is always beautiful from the sea. The slender white minarets scattered among the odd-shaped houses that clamber in a picturesque maze up the hill to the quaint monastery, and the broad walls of the old fortifications at the top, make an unforgettable picture in the sunlight. But the glory of the picture fades a little as one wanders among the smelly, airless, filthy streets, just as a lot of the picturesque disappears from those biblical-looking Jews, and those dignified old Turks as soon as one rubs shoulders with them. In a way that is, of course, the story of all the East, Far and Near. From a distance, romance, glamour, mystery; but, once an attempt is made to penetrate that enticing darkness, only disappointment and squalor are found behind the shadows.

Salonica was as queer in its politics as in everything else. Its inhabitants gloried in demonstrations, and a political meeting to them was like a visit from Lord George Sanger —peace to his ashes!—to Slowcomb-on-the-Mud. Their Revolution, after the surrender of Kavala by King Constantine to their hereditary enemies, was something quite fresh in revolts.

Matters began with a mass meeting and a procession carrying the Greek flag draped in

crape. After much indignant eloquence it was decided to telegraph a strong protest to the Government. A large crowd, wearing crape armlets, accompanied this message to the Telegraph Office, and sang the "Marseillaise," and cheered for Venizelos while it was being sent off! Satisfied that the nervous operator had tapped out this protest to their musical accompaniment, they dispersed.

A few days later, on August 3rd, 1916, a body calling itself the Committee of National Defence addressed two stirring Proclamations to the People and the Soldiers of Greece. And next day, at noon, all unexpectedly the city found itself in the throes of a Revolution.

At the head of the movement were Colonel Zimbrakakis of the Greek Army Service Corps, and Colonel Mazarakis of the artillery. The signal was given by a band of Cretan gendarmes, all devoted adherents of Venizelos, commanded by Second-Lieutenant Tsaconas, on the clerical staff at police headquarters.

At one o'clock some of these gendarmes returned to the barracks and invited the other gendarmes to join the movement; others were called in from their duties in the streets, and the lot harangued by the energetic second-lieutenant, who succeeded in winning practically all of them to his side. At half-past two

the *gendarmerie* repaired in a body to the church of St. Demetrius, and took the oath of allegiance to the new government. The Revolution was now fairly under way.

The other chap's troubles are always amusing. But, even though it may be a shame to smile, one cannot help seeing the comedy of this Revolution, important though it was. Never, perhaps, in history has a rebellion been started with so little preparation, or pursued such a commonplace course.

About three, little by little, a thousand rebels had been gathered together. Colonel Zimbrakakis, wearing the blue and white silk armlet which was the badge of the Committee of National Defence, held a formal review of his hastily equipped adherents, while an enormous crowd cheered and cried "Down with the King," and "Long Live Venizelos!" "Long Live the Entente!" Strictly in accordance with precedent, all the shops were shut and the public portraits of the King were at once replaced by photographs of M. Venizelos. But where this Revolution differed from most was that, instead of the atmosphere being one of tragic suspense and excitement, Salonica had rather the air of a Bank Holiday.

The next move was to the French Headquarters, where the gallant colonel offered

himself and his men to the service of the Allies to save Macedonia from the invaders. General Sarrail accepted the offer, and the Revolutionists went on their way rejoicing.

Their work was not yet done, however. There were still twelve hundred loyalist soldiers in the barracks at the Champ de Mars to be dealt with. On the subject of the planning and the plotting and the toasting that went on for the next eight or nine hours, history is silent. But at two o'clock in the morning, under cover of the darkness, the Cretan gendarmes crept with bated breath to the barracks in the Champ de Mars, surrounded them, and cut off the water !

The Royalists, on the alert, took alarm, and, fearing an attack, fired busily for some time, Then there was silence.

Just before dawn, having discovered what had really happened, sixty men were sent out from the barracks to attempt to obtain water and provisions. But they were received with such a fusillade from the gendarmes that they hastily returned from whence they came.

Colonel Zimbrakakis then announced that he would give the garrison until midday to surrender. After that Colonel Mazarakis and his artillery would take a hand. But General Sarrail had not been called a political general

for nothing. Very cleverly and very correctly he seized his opportunity to turn the Revolution to the Allies' account, to save the combatants from themselves, and to protect the people of Salonica from them both. He reminded both sides that there was a war on, that Salonica was his Base, and under martial law; and that he could not possibly allow this sort of thing to continue, fashionable though it might be in the Balkans, and used to it though the Salonicans might have become by similar little shows against the Bulgars as late as 1913. So he sent fifteen hundred infantry with their normal equipment of machine-guns, six trench mortars, and one anti-aircraft lorry—to support the Venizelists, in the sacred cause of law and order!

There must have been an extra twinkle in those steady grey eyes of his as he arrived on the parade ground, and, having carefully explained that he did not wish to mix himself up between Greek and Greek, accepted the surrender of the Royalist officers to the might of France!

That settled the Revolution. The Committee of National Defence had come out on top, and one more Nation, the patriot-Greek, was now added to our cosmopolitan force, much to King Constantine's wrath. How the movement

spread through Macedonia and the Islands, how the brave Colonel Christoudoulos and his men came to Salonica and joined the Venizelist forces, how M. Venizelos also came and with General Danglis and Admiral Condouriotis established the Triumvirate which governed so wisely and rendered such loyal service to our cause are not matters for these pages.

There was no more trouble. Salonica quietly settled down to make up for what it had lost in the few hours while the shops were shut, by putting up its prices a little higher. Cabbages rose to a drachma (tenpence) and the city continued calmly on the make, all through the months when heavy fighting was going on spasmodically up-country on the various fronts. But then Salonica was the Base, the place where General Routine Orders and the *Balkan News* came from, and the Mecca of week-end leave.

The *Balkan News* was the British Army paper—the French had three. All were boons and blessings to bored and stranded men, and considering their difficulties, journalistic triumphs. The *Balkan News* was always good reading if its title was something of a misnomer. Generally it gave us the news of all the world except the Balkans. It permeated up-country on lorries and ration trains. It had individuality, a sense of humour, some delightful contributors,

and more misprints than any other journal in the English tongue. But as most of its compositors knew no English this is not to be wondered at. It was a four-page sheet, and for our benefit it reprinted some of the most striking articles in the home papers, and gave us the official *communiqués*, together with amusing local sketches, and the more atrocious fragments of the soldier-poems it was apparently bombarded with. There was much in it too good to be lost, and it is to be hoped that some day "something will be done about it."

By great good fortune its offices escaped destruction in the fire, though situated right in the thick of it. But it had to come out afterwards as a single sheet to economize what remained of its stock of paper.

The fire began on a hot August Saturday afternoon. Among the many curses of the climate a high place must be given to the Vardar winds. These blow at intervals all the year round for two or three days at a time, making life unbearable with dust by day, and sleep impossible on account of the racket by night. It would be interesting to know how much those winds have cost the Allies in tentage and tarpaulins.

One of these winds had been raging for two days when the fire started. Salonica might

very well be called the Calamitous City. Thirteen pestilences and five serious outbreaks of cholera, seven earthquakes and fourteen big fires since the sixteenth century is a record few towns can challenge. The fifteenth fire began in the Jewish quarter, and, in spite of all rumours to the contrary, its origin was accidental. Although the same day the enemy flung twelve hundred incendiary shells into Monastir, and caused another big fire there and wounded many civilians, he had nothing to do with the conflagration at Salonica. A very humble individual, living in a very humble and dirty wooden house, was frying some *aubergine* in olive oil when the pan overturned—and the fat was in the fire.

He ran into the street and the fire followed him. The houses were ancient, sun-dried, and mainly of wood. The streets were narrow and winding ; and to fight a fire, in spite of fourteen previous experiences, there were, according to the *Balkan News*, only a " few ancient boxes, misnamed fire engines, worked by handles. One of them was marked Sun Fire Office, 1710."

Very soon it was obvious that the whole native quarter was in danger, but the people in the cafés and the hotels on the water fronts lingered over their long drinks, and ate their

dinners unconcernedly. Then gradually they began to wake up, and so did the inhabitants, who had crowded into the narrow streets to watch other people's houses burn. It dawned upon them that their streets and their houses would come next, and there began an exodus the like of which has seldom been surpassed.

Salonica is no ordinary city, and this was no ordinary fire. Its progress was appalling. The hopes that it would be confined to the narrow streets of the Ghetto, and that when it came to the broader streets of the modern part of the city it would be checked, were doomed to disappointment. It leapt all barriers. It was not a case of houses catching fire from neighbouring houses; whole districts burst into flame at once. Hear the *Balkan News*: "The Vardar wind blew before it a sort of forced draught or incandescent wave, which played on the houses a hundred yards or so in advance of the actual flames, and prepared them nicely for the burning, so when the next spark of fire came along the buildings began to burn furiously."

Everything was in favour of the fire and against the efforts of those who attempted to control it. There was a scarcity of water even for such futile appliances as were to hand, and the narrow streets were blocked by an utterly

undisciplined crowd of sightseers, looters, and wailing women and frantic men, making foolish efforts to salve unwieldy household gods.

"Flock and feather beds," says the *Balkan News*, "were the most favoured. Everybody—man, woman, and child—was burdened with them, and these later helped in the general destruction as, abandoned in the last rush nearer the water's edge, they became so many torches and, lit by wandering sparks, carried the epidemic on ahead."

The street scenes were amazing. Out of the Ghetto, dingy and overcrowded as most Ghettos are, rolled a tide of distracted humanity clad in many-coloured biblical costumes. The women—true children of Israel—wrung their hands and cried their lamentations aloud. The wind whistled and the fire roared; sobs and shrieks and shouts echoed on every side; mules and oxen and springless native carts clattered on the cobble-stones. The devil's orchestra was playing a symphony beyond the wildest dreams of Richard Strauss amid a babel of tongues and tears.

Frantic families surrounded the drivers of those long, noisy native carts, gesticulating, imploring, outbidding each other for their goods to be taken next. Bargains were struck and removals effected in panic time. Table

legs were thrust through treasured mirrors, sewing machines packed on china; to an accompaniment of splintering wood and breaking glass everything was bundled on higgledy-piggledy. Then off jolted the springless ox-cart over the cobbles, and off came its badly packed load after a hundred yards or so. The things remained where they fell. Deaf to entreaty and reproach, the driver went back to another house for another load. He had completed his bargain. The things were "moved." Payment, of course, was in advance. Again and again this happened, and one has more than a suspicion that the frequent overturning of these vehicles at street corners was not accidental. There are always ghouls to profit by other folks' misfortunes.

Gradually, as the seriousness of the situation became apparent, the Allies took a hand. British officers, acting at first independently, collected a few men and did what they could. Two Dennis fire engines belonging to the British Army were got to work. Hoses were run out by French and British sailors, and some attempt at a systematic fighting of the flames was organized.

But it was all in vain. Obviously more than half of the city was doomed. It is doubtful, indeed, if all the resources of London or New

York could have mastered such a holocaust. So troops were set to work and plans made to save the rest of the city from being engulfed. Timber from a huge store was cast into the sea, houses were to be ruthlessly blown up, thus far and no further was the fire to be allowed to go. Fortunately, however, the wind changed, and the conflagration burnt itself out.

Meanwhile, back in the burning region, the piteous scenes went on. Soldiers were helping now in clearing the streets and the houses, and experiencing at times the greatest difficulty in getting the people out. Some of the houses in the Turkish quarter gave a lot of trouble. In these ramshackle warrens, ancient, wrinkled dames screamed with horror, and fled down dark passages to hide from the infidels who wanted to save them. They couldn't believe that their homes were going next.

Tragedy and farce walked hand in hand as they always do at a fire. A British brigadier came along, and collared a padre—a major.

"Clear this street and keep it clear," he commanded.

The padre got to work with a band of willing helpers. Then a woman came up to him, frantic and tearful. She implored him to let her go back for a moment. Apparently there was something she had forgotten, something

she must save. She clung to him and would not be denied, so, moved by pity, he took her back himself.

"Hurry! Hurry!" he said, and waited outside amid the rush and roar of the oncoming flames, scorched by the heat and wondering if they would ever get back.

She dashed into her dingy house.

"Poor wretch, it must be money—her life's savings," he thought.

Then she came out—with a common china vessel in her hand, a vessel without even a handle. For this I have the word of a Major of the Church.

Probably it *was* money that she had gone back for, poor demented thing, and in her panic she had forgotten what she wanted and snatched up the first thing that caught her eye.

It was obvious now that the centre of the city was doomed, and that the water-front would go with the rest. Officers staying in the hotels began hastily to pack their things, and wondered where they would finish the night. The manager of one of the most crowded hotels, resigning himself to the inevitable, doled out parting tots of whisky free of charge—"the last drink you will have in my hotel, gentlemen!" His unconcern was superb. He knew his hotel

was doomed, and thus gracefully he sped his parting guests. It was better than fiddling.

Fires are notorious for their freakishness, but there was one freak of this fire that betrayed the handiwork of the High Gods of Irony. At the corner of the Place de la Liberté, in the very heart of the flames, stood a big Oriental Stores, an enemy trading concern " out of bounds " to the Allied troops. This escaped without the slightest injury, not even a pane of glass in the iron-shuttered windows being broken. It was a new, modern, fire-proof building, faced with marble, which, of course, explains its survival.

If the military could do little to check or control the fire, they could and they did do much for its eighty thousand victims. Naturally there was a certain amount of looting, especially before the Allies formally took charge. Many a native came out of the fire with more worldly goods than he had ever possessed before it, and here and there a few soldiers and sailors helped themselves to drink and anything else they fancied. But few though those black sheep were, hardly any of them were British. That night and during the days and nights that followed Tommy covered himself with glory. In two days he did more to make a new Ally a lifelong friend than all the Allied diplomacy has accomplished.

All the motor-lorries were turned out—French and English—to carry the poor homeless refugees to various hastily-organized places of shelter, and to remove such effects as they had saved from the disaster to places of safety. That was where Tommy showed himself the dear, good, kindly chap he is.

To women unaccustomed to be treated with consideration by men and looked down upon by Muslim and Christian alike as little more than beasts of burden, he was a revelation in homely kindness and genuine sympathy.

"Come on, mother, up you go!" And a tottering old lady would find herself lifted gently into a lorry, and her bundle politely handed up to her.

"Now, now, this won't do! Don't cry, missis! Cheer up—come for a ride and forget all about it. Nice little chap that kiddy of yours. *Don't* cry, missis! 'Tain't no good crying about what can't be helped!" And a kindly hand would pat a poor distressed mother on the back, and take her baby from her while she climbed into the lorry that was to bear her to a refugee camp—her new home.

"That's right, granny, keep smiling! My, ain't you a lively old bird!" And a filthy, wrinkled old dame and a sewing-machine and a looking-glass would join the rest.

" 'Ere ! give us a 'and, Bill ! Oh, strike me pink ! this 'aint 'arf some moving job ! "

They didn't understand a word of his language, but they knew what he meant. The tone of his voice, the way he handled them and their goods and chattels, the careful way he drove, and the willing way he worked—they understood that !

It was a city of misery and despair ; ruin and the apathy that follows disaster were written on almost every face and Tommy got it into his head that his job was to " cheer 'em up a bit " while he was helping them—and he did it ! And he played fair, bless him ! He was just as nice to the old women as to the young and pretty ones, and just as kind to the men as he was to the children. They were all in the same boat. There was a word of rough homely comfort and consolation for them all, and as many cigarettes and as much chocolate as he could run to.

He has won Salonica's heart for ever and ever. All he did was to work for twenty hours on end, carting homeless men and women and children to refugee camps, and acting as a furniture remover for all sorts of amazing rubbish. That's all—not much for a soldier who has got to do what he is told from peeling potatoes to taking a trench. But it was the way he did it that

counted. Till then Salonica had merely borne with our presence, and fleeced us as nobody has ever been fleeced before. But after that night they regarded us with positive affection—and prices went a little higher to prove it!

The loss of life was astonishingly small for such a fire, and the amount of military damage done was insignificant. The task of feeding and housing eighty thousand refugees was quietly taken over by the Authorities and the Allies combined, and charitable contributions flowed in from all over the world. Plans for rebuilding were at once got out under the supervision of the well-known British architect, Douglas Mawson, and some day a neater, sweeter, and cleaner city will—or will not—rise on the ashes of the old. Those who know the Greek best incline to the latter view.

So far as the Army was concerned the two most important institutions of Salonica were not involved at all—the French Cercle Militaire and the British Expeditionary Force Canteen. It was still possible to dine, and to purchase such articles as the Canteen had in stock. But the whole of the principal shopping region was burnt out. In a day or two, however, such goods as the merchants had contrived to salve began to make their appearance on the pavements or suspended on railings. Salonica became

a city of hawkers and street-sellers. As usual one man's poison proved another man's meat. Such cafés and restaurants and hotels as had escaped the flames found themselves doing a business beyond their wildest dreams. Spare rooms were gold mines, and sheds earned more in a night than they had cost to build. There was a squashing and a packing of people and goods which would have evoked the pity of a sardine. Every dirty little shop by day was an Hôtel Splendide by tariff at night. Every hut and tent and corrugated shed belonging to the British was turned into a free lodging, and all day long pitiful crowds stood about waiting to be fed. The greatest mercy was that the weather continued fine and warm. With furniture scattered through the streets, and men, women, and children sleeping in all the gardens, a typical Salonica thunderstorm would, as an idiomatic English-speaking Greek expressed it, have " fairly put the tops on it, not half ! "

# THE DAILY ROUND

## TO 'ENRY

PTE. SMITH WAXES LYRICAL ON THE SUBJECT OF THE FORD MOTOR LORRY, SOMETIMES KNOWN AS THE " TIN LIZZIE," BUT ALWAYS CALLED IN THE BALKANS A " 'ENRY "

You ain't exactly beautiful ; no, 'Enry, that you ain't ;
Your wicked ways at times would raise a cuss-word from a saint.
You're a cross between a bedstead and a spider on the spree,
An' 'ow you ever goes at all's a miracle to me !

On a cold and frosty mornin', it's some job to make you start,
You stiff, back-firin' blighter, that's the time you break my 'eart !
An' if it's 'ot, old kettlepot, your water don't 'arf boil,
An' while you run, you shake like fun, and stink of burnin' oil !

Your torque-rods bend like putty, and your coil's a box o' tricks ;
Your carburation's sulky an' your commutator sticks.
You're simply " It " at missing (either cylinders or nuts),
But none the less, I must confess you've got a lot of guts !

You've bumped your way up mountains on a track all bends and rocks,
Though your first-speed band's the limit and it gives the left foot socks !

The 'ills was steep, the ruts was deep—the Staff cars all 'ad fits—
But *you* got up 'em some'ow, though you shook yourself to bits!

You've ploughed your way across the sands (and sand's the worst by far),
Dry, shifting sand's a death-trap for a pukka moty car—
There ain't no grip, the back wheels slip, the front ones will not steer;
But *you* get through, though why you do, I ain't exactly clear!

You've nosed your way 'crost marshy tracks where cars ain't never bin,
Your wheels 'ave stuck in slimy muck, your axle's sunk right in.
But, when we dig you out again, you start up with a roar,
An' off you go, nor care a blow, till in you flops once more!

Now fair is fair's my motto, so it's up to me to say,
You've proved yourself dam' useful in your own pertickler way.
You're made in twenty minutes, and you look it too, old son—
But there and back, you've done your whack against the 'Orrid 'Un!

## CHAPTER III

### ACTIVE SERVICE

HAVING sacrificed chronology to convenience, it is necessary now to go back to the day of our landing.

We proceeded to the A.S.C. camp, which was then at Mikra Bay in a field that ran down to the sea. Four of our men were knocked out by the heat before we got there, and a few minutes after our arrival, while those who had gone before were doing their best to make us feel like new boys at school, we made acquaintance with a Salonica thunderstorm. We did not know then that Salonica has a brand of thunderstorm peculiarly its own. Lightning and thunder such as we had never seen or heard were followed by sheets of rain that hammered itself through the old, leaky, single tents that were our portion, and soaked our partially unpacked bedding.

Fortunately we were not kept hanging about now we had actually arrived overseas. The long-delayed offensive was in progress, and

transport was urgently needed. Two days later we left Mikra Bay with all available vans loaded with oats and bread, and travelled all day over a road which struck us as very bad, but which later we learned was one of the best in the country. We picked up during the afternoon a subaltern "on detachment" with his men and cars, and for the first time found ourselves a complete company.

We passed that night in the open, a mile or two away from two large British general hospitals at Verte Kop, great bombing favourites with friend Fritz. Our rest was a short one, for we had learned that the Battle of Ostrovo was in full swing and the Serbs were short of ammunition. So we started again at daybreak, and had our first experience of a really bad and hilly Balkan road. That road has been made up now into a very respectable main road with reasonable gradients and wooden bridges. But that day we bumped over boulders and stuck in muddy places and pushed till the sweat poured off us to get our Henrys up the hill to Vodena—which now a Ford in good order can take on top speed nearly all the way.

We reached our appointed camping-place just outside Ostrovo without any casualties. But no time was allowed us to pitch camp. Off went our vans at once with ammunition,

passing General Sarrail and the Crown Prince of Serbia, sure portents that big things were happening.

It began to rain—and we had only two or three tents all told. The rest were coming on later from the base. We had no bread—only army biscuits—no fresh meat or vegetables, and no time to cook them if we had them. Nobody could have been more supremely uncomfortable, but we rather liked it. Were we not on Active Service?

Quite close by, Dr. Bennett's unit of the Scottish Women's Hospital, just up from Salonica, was establishing itself. Seeing how bad the weather promised to be, Dr. Bennett took pity on us and lent us a couple of marquees, into which we all packed for the night. Doubtless she has forgotten that by now, but 708 Coy. has not.

After dinner—bully beef and biscuits was the menu—we climbed a hill and watched the shells bursting, and listened to the machine-gun and rifle fire. The Serbians were victorious: the enemy was in full retreat, and we retired to bed elated and weary.

That feeling of general elation was another example of the curious psychology of soldiering. We all had it; we were all as keen as mustard. Some of us had been struggling for two years

to get the Army to take us, and some had been shamed into joining by the frantic efforts of voluntary coercionists, just before Conscription came in, and some had many months' service already to their credit. But now we were together we were one. It was always like that. When later we got slack through idleness, we were all slack; when we were "fed up," we were all fed up; and at different times we were all optimists or pessimists together. All our emotions were endemic.

We slept soundly that night in spite of the thunder of the guns, and rose at five next morning eager to justify our existence. The sun was in the sky and on the hills. Marguerites, cornflowers, and wild azaleas were smiling at us in the grass. The hills were lovely in a dozen shades of purple, and Lake Ostrovo was agleam in the sunlight. Never had war seemed so ridiculous, so wantonly futile and foolish. Ten to twelve millions out to slay each other in such a world on such a morning! Was the earth peopled with lunatics?

A call to breakfast interrupted these trite and unsoldierly reflections, and down we sat to a hasty meal of biscuits, Army bacon, tea, and jam.

At six we set out, and at six-fifteen we wished we had never been born. We had introduced

ourselves to Ostrovo sands, and the pleasure was decidedly not on our side. Never ask any M.T. man from that Front to talk about Ostrovo sands. It is hardly safe indeed to ask the Scottish Women's Ambulance drivers. They have been heard to say things that—but never mind.

It was everywhere—deep, loose, bottomless sand, six square kilometres of it, stretching from the shores of the lake to the foot of the mountains. Heavy lorries bent their torque rods in it, and had to be specially strengthened to get through. Fords simply gave up the ghost.

There we were, dying to win the War, and our first act was to get sand-logged, and to add to our joy we had taken the wrong track. Our only comfort was that the O.C. himself was leading! In the broiling sun of a windless September morning, ours was the pleasant job of turning all our Henrys round and getting them out of it! It took some doing, but by push and perspiration it was done, and at last we got off with a load of sacks of flat, dark-coloured bread for a supply dump at a place called Katranitsa.

None of these roads was made up then, though in places prisoners and natives were working on them. We bumped along by the

lake and admired the scenery with one eye while we looked up for aeroplanes with the other. A long convoy on a dusty road is a favourite target for cruising 'planes in places where anti-aircraft guns are few and far between, though it is a target which they very seldom hit. And then we came to our first hill. All others had been mere pimples. Take the worst features of such famous English hills as Sutton Bank, Lynton and Porlock, mix with water into a stiff paste, and simmer in a hot oven till nicely browned; pepper with rocks and ornament with ruts, and you will be somewhere near it. Such a surface, such gradients, such impossibly sudden bends, with big drops on either side, must be seen to be believed—and, alas, they cannot be seen now because the road has been made up!

Henry after Henry tried and failed, and in the end we had to push them up one by one. It took us three and a half hours to get the convoy up that hill at a temperature of eighty-four in the shade—and never again on that journey did we carry quite such heavy loads.

The rest of the trip was only fairly bad—a winding road with stiff gradients, many bends, a rock-strewn surface and several sudden plunges into the beds of streams with precipitous rises on the other side, and a long climb up a

serpentine pass. But we got through all right, and the ever-friendly Serbs presented us with bunches of small wine-grapes to cool our parched and dusty lips. Routine orders, by the way, absolutely forbade the eating of all uncooked fruit; but—well, I leave it to you.

We were just beginning to return when a long train of ramshackle ox-carts came lumbering up. In the distance they looked like a page out of a cheap illustrated edition of the Bible, but as they creaked and jolted closer one forgot their crude picturesqueness in a thrill of horror. They were laden with wounded, roughly bandaged, straight from the firing-line, lying on straw in those springless vehicles and exposed to the sun and the flies! The flies were awful. On every patch of blood there was a ghastly cluster of them.

The eyes of the French doctor in charge of that pitiful convoy gleamed when he caught sight of our *petits camions*. In much too fluent French he explained that all the field hospitals were overcrowded and if we could relieve him of his burden he would be infinitely obliged. Otherwise the poor wretches must go on in those dreadful ox-carts and take hours on the journey.

We had no orders to carry wounded, but it was impossible to refuse. They were trans-

ferred to our vans, and it did one's heart good to see the wave of tenderness that came over our men. Driving cushions were given up, kit-bags turned into pillows, and cigarettes lit and popped into their mouths.

Some of the cases were very serious. One wounded Serbian officer was delirious and kept plucking the bandage from his head. Three times it had to be rebandaged, and then one less severely wounded was told off to prevent such a thing happening again.

In spite of desperate protests in execrable French—the subaltern in charge was only at the 17th lesson of Hugo's French self-taught !—a particularly grave case was placed in his own van. The French doctor shrugged his shoulders. The situation was only too clear. Obviously the man was unfit for such a journey ; obviously he might die on the road. But nothing could be done for him there, and there was just a chance that if he could be got to a decently equipped hospital he might be saved.

So he had to take his chance, poor fellow, and his luck was out. The life was bumped out of him on the way back, and next day another little wooden cross was added to those dotted about among the hills.

The Serbians, we found later, were very tender about their own dead. All over Mace-

donia they made little cemeteries which were ceremoniously blessed by the priests, and were models of neatness and effective design.

They were not always so particular, however, about enemy dead. These they often left unburied on the mountains.

At half-past five on the following morning we set forth for that wretched hill again. The usual struggle ensued, and one by one, pully-hauly, we forced our vans to the top. It was four o'clock in the afternoon before we managed to snatch a brief breathing space for lunch—bully, of course. Then fresh orders came through. All day we had been rushing up supplies; now ammunition was wanted. The Bulgars were still retreating, and the Cavalry Division of the 1st Royal Serbian Army wanted to get busy. So at five we returned to camp, gave the men a meal of hot stew and tea, for which they had no difficulty in finding accommodation though they had lunched at four, and started out again at seven.

This meant tackling that bugbear of a hill in the dark. Many of our cars had been in use for some time and had no lights left, oil wells having shaken off sidelamps, and headlamps having gone West. There had been no time to attend to these details: it was all we could do to keep the vehicles on the road, and our

workshops and store lorries were not yet up from Salonica. The prospect, therefore, was not a pleasant one, for the night was dark and that hill was decidedly unnerving. The only way to take it was "all out." One just had to go for those bends and chance it, and as one could not see the road it was not nice. Still, we got them all up, a subaltern making two journeys with the cars of two men who were too timid to do it themselves without lights. He didn't like it, but somebody had to do it.

We reached the first dump at two in the morning, swopped some of the munitions we had on board for different kinds, and then set out again after a brief nap in the vans. Our road now was a cross-country route and the greater part of it was something that only Fords could tackle, and even they gave it best in places. But we jogged along, weeping for the non-skid chains we had not got, towing and pushing and lifting vans out of difficulties, and discovering that the human tummy and its contents do not care very much for a perpetual bumping on board a Ford over a road that isn't worthy of even being called a track. Horse riding may be good for the liver, but that sort of motoring isn't. At one place the way was so bad that there was nothing for it but to turn to—all hands—with pick and shovel, and

*Photo by Dr. Anderson*

SOROVICH

A BEND IN THE PASS WHERE SEVERAL ACCIDENTS OCCURRED BEFORE THE PROPER BRIDGE AND PARAPET WERE BUILT

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

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cut a new road for ourselves. Some of the scenery was very fine, but I fear we paid very little attention to views and colour effects.

Ultimately we cut into a road of sorts crowded with artillery and troops and clouded with dust. Reaching our destination, we unloaded our munitions—and were promptly sent off to another dump for more. We did another cross-country journey through a maze of field tracks, and, by loading ourselves, just managed to get back to the road again by dark. In the meantime, however, a bridge had broken down, and we found ourselves obliged to rush a deep and rocky ford in the darkness with steep banks on either side. The men whose nerve failed them and who let their engines stop in mid-stream had the pleasure of getting out and starting them again.

More trouble was awaiting us at the dump. An indignant Frenchman in charge of a French motor convoy protested that we had bagged his bit of ground. Our Serbian guide was positive that we had unloaded at the right place. The Frenchman wanted it all moved, and prophesied all sorts of terrible fates for all concerned if French and Serbian ammunition got mixed. We had another load, which we wanted to dump in the same place, and then make tracks for home. To add to the complica-

tions of the situation, the Serbian guide who had brought us there spoke neither French nor English.

Tact was needed—and tact was applied. Instead of shifting the shells that were there, we added some more to them and went on our way rejoicing. Rejoicing, however, is hardly the word. Already we had been on the road for close on thirty hours with nothing to eat but one ration of bully beef and biscuits and jam. We weren't acclimatized yet, and several of the men were ill and rapidly becoming worse. Dysentery and malaria had been very busy among us ever since we arrived. Four or five in the convoy were "feeling bad," and one was in a state of collapse. The "feeling-bads" were cheered up as well as possible, and one of the two officers present had to drive the car of the man who was too ill to drive it himself.

A long and tedious journey followed over a bad mountain road in the dark. The standard Ford lighting system, needless to say, in such circumstances excited our sternest disapproval. We were a convoy of fifty-six cars on a strange and dangerous road, and to go at any speed was out of the question. That meant we must either be driving on low gear all the time or slipping the clutch to get any light worth mentioning; for, going slowly on top speed,

the Ford system gives only a dim glimmer. Many months later we were equipped with acetylene headlamps in place of this cheap and nasty electric system, but then we had to manage as best we could.

Soon the number of stops the guide was making to ask his way became very noticeable. Then he took to routing out sleeping peasants from under their ox-carts, and soldiers from their bivouacs. It did not need a Sherlock Holmes to suspect that he was lost, but after each interview he went on again with such confidence that we could not be certain. However, these stoppages grew so frequent that Authority felt called upon to investigate.

Problem: How do you ask a guide, who doesn't speak your language and whose tongue you are equally unfamiliar with, if he is lost or not? It sounds simple, but think about it for a moment and see.

Two words of Serbian comprised our vocabulary then—dobro (good) and neo dobro (no good). The time, it may be mentioned, was one in the morning, and the business went something like this:

Subaltern (*pointing ahead, with tremendous significance*): "Dobro?"

Guide (*very readily*): "Dobro."

Subaltern (*sternly*): "Neo dobro!"

Guide (*confidently*) : " Dobro ! Dobro ! " (*Followed by lengthy explanation in his native tongue.*)

Subaltern (*to sergeant*) : " He is lost, isn't he, sergeant ? "

Sergeant : " Can't make out, sir. I think so."

Subaltern (*after a despairing glance into the darkness in all directions*) : " Neo dobro ? " (*Then, pointing backwards to indicate convoy turning round.*) " Dobro ! Dobro ! "

Guide (*pointing forward and more confidently than ever*) : " Dobro ! Dobro ! "

Subaltern (*resignedly*) : " Dobro ! Dobro ! "

So we went on again till we saw wounded men on comrades' arms limping along the ditch by the side of the road, and mules with wounded on stretchers, also keeping to the ditch. That was good enough. The convoy was stopped and turned, and the guide was treated to some strong choice English of which he gathered the drift, if the words were unknown to him. The other subaltern, bringing up the rear, was met, and he, too, conversed for a little with the guide.

Three or four kilometres back we discovered a Serbian camp some way off the road, and sent the guide to find out where we were. The commandant returned with him, accompanied by an English-speaking officer.

They were amused. Light-heartedly they informed us that they had watched us pass, making straight for the Bulgar lines, and that the road even there was well within range of the enemy's guns. When asked why they had made no effort to stop us, they replied that the sentries would have done that further along! The fact that we were responsible for the safety of our vans and our men, and that half a dozen shells would have done the lot in didn't trouble them in the least. But, as they were very good fellows and hadn't been to bed for three nights, we tried to see the humour of the situation with them, and made jokes about our Company being very anxious to be the first to enter Monastir. All the same it was a very narrow escape.

One would like to know what the Bulgars thought. A large convoy of Ford vans on low gear, with their headlights blazing, on a stretch of road which the enemy had been shelling all day is something not easily overlooked. Why didn't they shell us? Did they mistake us for ambulances, and desire to be chivalrous for once, or were they puzzled and apprehensive of some surprise movement, and merely holding their fire? We shall never know. But, as there is no question that we were within easy range, we can only be thank-

ful that we got out of the soup without being scalded.

We slept from three to six on our vans by the side of the road, on ground taken from the enemy only the day before. In the morning we had nothing to eat, but contrived to cadge half a dozen loaves from the Serbs (short themselves), which we divided among the men. The officers invited us to breakfast, and we felt quite guilty as we sneaked off after sharing out the bread. But " breakfast " turned out to be a tiny cup of coffee and a cigarette ! Then they loaded us up with wounded, and some Bulgarian prisoners they were anxious to get rid of ; and we started once more for camp, on the right road this time.

But our troubles were by no means over. We had been two nights on the road, instead of one, and had covered much more country than we had expected. The result was that, although each van had a spare can, petrol began to give out.

Another thing that Henry is rather annoying about is his petrol supply. On really steep hills, such as we had to negotiate out there, nothing but a nearly full tank will take one to the top. It is possible, of course, to get up on reverse in such circumstances, providing one has room to turn round. But that is hardly a practicable

operation on a Balkan pass. The situation was desperate and called for corresponding measures. When the vans stuck, the petrol that remained in their tanks was drained off into tins, the wounded passengers were divided among the rest—a terrible job with lying-down cases—and the stranded vans and drivers left by the roadside till petrol could be sent out to them.

The surface at that time was appalling; and, moreover, the road was jammed with French artillery and horse transport. What with one thing and another, we shall not soon forget that journey, or that guide, if he did "find" two chickens somewhere and present them to the officers. Incidentally it may be observed that these two chickens mysteriously disappeared in the end. We never ate them.

Two days later we received orders to shift camp at daybreak. Everything was packed up, and we were all ready to move off when the order, as usual, was cancelled. We stood by, cursing the Army way all day, and finally were ordered to proceed. So we started at 4.30 in the afternoon and had another tussle with the sand. Thank goodness that was the last we ever had to do with it; but that day it nearly bested us. Still, as usual, we got through in the end, and then found ourselves face to face with the steepest hill in the district. That meant another

fight. Some of the vans had to be towed up by hand-power as bluejackets tow a gun. Everybody had to lend a hand, and everybody nearly died of it before the trick was done. Then we found ourselves on the Gornichevo Pass—improved now out of all recognition, but at that time in a terrible state. Fortunately some Serbs employed on the road were encamped close by, and we turned them out to help to push us up. This they did with their usual willingness to do anything for the English. Darkness came on, and, utterly exhausted, we camped for the night by the side of the road—and a very cold miserable night it was.

At daybreak we resumed our journey, arriving at our camping-ground at Sorovich about midday, and at once starting work.

It was at Sorovich that the first death in the Company occurred. Apart from that sad incident our stay there was a very pleasant one. The site of the camp was excellent, and the mountain and lake scenery very beautiful. The village itself with its bright red roofs was not so interesting at close quarters as it seemed in the distance. A great part of it was in ruins from the last Balkan War, only the most squalid of its houses were inhabited by natives, and hardly any shops were open. The other houses

were not empty, however. They were occupied by the French. We tried to get one for our officers' mess but were too late, though the place had only been taken from the Bulgars a day or two. Trust a Frenchman in war-time to get everything that is going, from a cabbage to a castle!

For some time we worked fairly hard on a fairly bad road, but in a straightforward sort of way, carrying supplies and ammunition to Banitsa. Now and then a car went over a precipice, always in our case without injury to the driver.

Another Ford Company, 709, stationed at Ostrovo, was not so lucky. One day one of our men reported that he had found the remains of a Ford, and the ashes of its driver, burned to death as a result of the petrol igniting after the car had fallen over a cliff. We sent out a burial party, but they found the remains already interred on their arrival. Later we learned the full story of the disaster.

There was a sharp bend in the road there, with a steep drop on either side, and no parapet. The driver, following another van at night, did not see the bend but saw the lights of the van that had passed it right ahead. He drove straight on, poor chap, and in its fall the van turned over and pinned him underneath. The

petrol ignited, and his comrades had the horrible experience of watching without being able to get down to him. And then another accident happened. The officer in charge missed his footing in the darkness, and fell over the other side and injured himself very severely.

The chief excitement during our stay at Sorovich was the news of the fall of Monastir. We got it seven times. Another very startling occurrence was that one of our colleagues shot a wild goose; at least, he said it was a wild goose. But undoubtedly the most important event of all was that our workshops officer made us an oven for the officers' mess.

We had a thunderstorm or two, and one sand storm. The latter was most unpleasant. A chilly wind, heavily laden with sand, blew strenuously all day long. Everything was sandy—tents, food, clothes, hair, and it even worked its way into the box that held our gramophone records.

One evening some of us went out for a stroll across the hills to a ridge beside the lake. It was a very quaint and out-of-the-way little place, mainly inhabited by Turks, and our arrival created a commotion. The mayor came up and shook hands, and all the male and infant population crowded round. We discovered that, as usual, one of the natives had

been to America and spoke what he called English. Through him we bargained for six rush mats to be made for our tents at eightpence each, and for fifty eggs at twopence, to be collected by the following evening. It is, perhaps, worth mentioning in parenthesis that a year later the price of these mats had risen from eightpence to seven drachmae (5s. 10d.) and eggs were sevenpence!

We made our way back over the hills and were rewarded with an unforgettable view. From the summit of a hill we looked down upon two lakes, each circled with golden sand. And one was illumined by the setting sun and the other by a monstrous, rising moon.

On the following evening we took a Ford car over the hills to fetch our mats and eggs, and discovered, unofficially, the marvellous capabilities of Henry as a mountain climber so long as the surface is dry. Incidentally, we nearly broke our necks. The villagers welcomed us this time as old friends, the children suffered themselves to be fed with sweets; and several rather pretty young women risked the displeasure of their lords and masters to peep at us.

As a matter of fact, the British always got on better with the natives than the French did. As they put it, "If a British say he pay, he pay,"

whereas many of the Frenchmen had an unpleasant trick of bargaining for eggs, chickens, and vegetables, and then forgetting to leave the money when they walked off with the goods. Time and again at various places we heard the French told that there wasn't an egg or a fish or a cabbage to be had, and were then furtively conducted to a hiding-place where we could buy all we wanted. The French were also often a little too arbitrary in other ways. Truth is truth and, for one reason or another, neither with the Serbs nor the Macedonians were the French very popular in the Balkans. But the British always were.

On our return from that expedition we found that orders had come through for another shift further up the line.

## CHAPTER IV

### TRANSPORT TROUBLES

THIS time the order was not cancelled first, but was carried out straight away. After some difficulty in finding a site we pitched camp just outside the village of Neokazi, then only a very few kilometres from the front line. The village itself was a dreary place, dusty and muddy, like most Macedonian villages in this region mainly in ruins from this or previous wars.

The most exciting incident of the move was that our petrol lorry caught fire. The driver very pluckily started up his engine and drove his burning vehicle away from the petrol store itself, and then, while the flames were being extinguished with "Pyrenes," fell down in a swoon from the fumes.

It was here that serious trouble with our cars began. The road we were working was a specially nasty one: half-way up a range of hills, very greasy, as well as very rough and narrow, with trenches on one side and various

alarming drops on the other. We were so close to the firing line that lights were forbidden, and in consequence our vans were always getting into difficulties. Night after night, usually in pouring rain, we had to turn out and rescue them after a drop into one of the ravines, or having been driven into that line of trenches by the side of the road. At last we hit on a new plan. Instead of towing and dragging them out, we took with us half a dozen men from the section the car in trouble belonged to. Then the vehicle was bodily lifted on to the road again, and the driver left to the mercy of the comrades he had kept out of bed in the dark and the wet.

Daily, wounded Serbs came by our camp in what seemed a never-ending procession, on mules, in carts, and afoot. An ambulance was the rarest of sights. There was none of the Western lavishness either in accommodation or treatment on the Serbian Front, and the casualties just then were piteously heavy. Our return journeys were always made loaded with them, and we witnessed many terrible scenes at the Clearing Stations, so that day by day our horror and our hatred of war grew fiercer and fiercer. Ghastly stories were told us, too, of cruelties and outrages which had happened in Serbia the year before.

The mud was our greatest difficulty just then, and one night it fairly bested us. We struggled on till we could go no further. To make matters worse, we had wounded on board at the time, and were supposed to transfer them at the dump to the heavy lorries working night and day between the dump and railhead. But it could not be done. We just managed to reach Neokazi village, and there we took possession of the church, which fortunately had only one shell-hole in the roof. Then the poor fellows were bedded down in straw and made as comfortable as possible, while messengers were sent on to our camp, and every empty bottle that could be raked up was filled with hot tea.

The village pope had a pitiful congregation that night. The picture of these poor wretches cradled in straw and drinking "English tea" lives in the memory still. With it there comes the usual rush of thoughts about the wanton imbecility of this most brutal of all the world's games. One cursed the spirit of Nationalism, lock, stock, and barrel. The Evil Spirit which urged Germany to make this mess: the Good Spirit that led these blood-drained, lice-infested, pain-racked wretches to fight on and on for five years till they came to this—away with them both for ever and ever! It was all too appalling. The Western Front, Mesopotamia,

Russia, Rumania, Italy, and Turkey—similar scenes were taking place there, both sides of the line. One mustn't forget that. The Central Powers—they, too, were suffering just like this. Blood was flowing among them: their women were weeping and their children were trying to realize that Daddy wasn't coming home from the War one day, after all.

Passing into that crudely decorated Greek Orthodox Church, with the wind blowing through the shell-hole, one's brain reeled. To think sanely was impossible. One wanted it to stop; passionately, madly one wanted it to stop then and there. And at the same time one wanted it to go on—ay, on and on, whatever the cost, till the enemy was beaten to his knees and the whole world was so revolted and so weary of the dreadful business that never could it happen again! And one wanted to go out and join in the slaughter—one resented the decision of doctors who condemned one to the A.S.C. One wanted to go out and kill and kill. Moved by pity of these silently suffering Serbs, one wanted to make more suffering just like that. Yes. Sane thinking goes when the ultimatum expires. Muddle and mess of brain and body—that's war.

The Serbs were fighting then with that steadfast courage and determination that char-

acterized them all through that campaign. They meant to have Monastir. It was a sentiment, a soul-craving with them. Winter was coming on, and here they were in the year that was to give them back their country, still in exile, still practically where they were twelve months ago.

It was a tragedy within the Great Tragedy. It is difficult on the spot and at the time to read a situation aright. But, as far as one could make out, exhausted France didn't want to go on, especially with uncertain Greece in the background. Her generals realized that the fall of Monastir would be only a sentimental victory, a waste of blood that would lead nowhere. But, almost against their will, they were driven on by the force of public opinion here and at home. Monastir was a place easy to discover on the map. It was big enough for "Our Military Correspondent" to find out a great deal about in the encyclopædia.

In our minds our stay at Neokazi will always be associated with a plague of mice. It was about that time that they started ravaging among our clothes. British arms, tunics, sleeping-bags and underclothing—nothing was safe from them. That particular stretch of country appears to have more than its share of field-mice and crows. The latter, indeed, are

there in their thousands. It seems strange so many should be allowed to exist in an agricultural country, but possibly that is only a side-issue of the War. In times of peace some effort may be made to keep their numbers down. As trees are very scarce—and will be scarcer still for some years after the Allied army's visit—there are very few rookeries about, and the majority of these birds roost on the ground at night.

Practically all the English war correspondents visited us while we were at Neokazi. Calvert, of *The Times*, turned up one day very hungry, and was sent on his way rejoicing in one of our vans with a Maconochie ration and a loaf of bread. He was accompanied by that prince of photographers, Beswich, a Serbian, who stayed up on a mountain all night with a thousand unburied dead to secure a good photo in the morning, and so place on pictorial record one of the finest achievements of his countrymen. Ward Price was also a frequent and very welcome visitor, and his appetite for buttered toast in a tent on a chilly afternoon is one of the most pleasant recollections of the War. Ferguson, who was with him, was left completely in the shade. Noel, the American, was another of our friends, and we all regretted his return to Paris.

The weather was bad, the roads were wicked, and the demands upon us were beyond our powers to fulfil. We did our best, but had to pay the price. The men had no time for washing clothes—they started at daybreak and were out in the mud till long after dark. Whether it was that, or a legacy from some of the many wounded we carried we shall never be quite sure, but one sad day we had to send a whole crowd with all their kit to be disinfected at one of the hospitals.

Another trouble was front wheels. We watched their adjustment as carefully as we could, but van after van got laid up for front ball races. Nothing could be done. They wore out through the constant strain imposed upon them by the muddy roads, and there were no fresh supplies in the country. Then back springs started to go, and once more the supply was insufficient. Centre bolts were inspected as carefully as a munition worker is searched for matches; leaves were greased and loads watched. In short, we did our best to keep as many cars as possible ploughing through a foot of sticky mud with a foundation of bumpy boulders. But back springs went in alarming numbers all the same. The Serbs were capturing large batches of Bulgarian and German prisoners just then, and they turned them on to

road-making and mending at once. That helped, and somehow or other we managed to keep a respectable number of cars on the road till at length supplies of ball races and back springs arrived. And then another trouble afflicted us.

This time it was front springs. Daily, in alarming numbers, one, two, three, and four leaves at a time gave up the ghost. And, as usual, there were none in the country! Our fate was only too obvious. The metal had become crystallized; no spring could be expected to survive such conditions of working for long, and all would assuredly go in the end.

We had no proper forge for welding the broken leaves. We had not even a workshop lorry then. G. 1098 had not laid one down; though we got one later. Our forge was a small field one, able to heat only a few inches at a time, and having no electric drill the metal had to be reheated after welding for holes to be punched in it. Spring steel is queer stuff at the best of times, and as may be imagined such welding was not very successful. Later, indeed, we contrived, thanks to the skill and amazing industry of our two smiths, to make springs out of spring steel which would stand up for a fortnight or so; but just then there was no spring steel in the country either!

The rows of cars with their engines resting on wooden blocks daily increased in length, and we all began to wonder what would become of us in the event of a retreat. For a long time, mainly through sickness, we had been suffering from a shortage of men. This had been temporarily remedied by the attachment of a section of Serbian drivers, and now, by the delicious irony of Base depots and the high gods, they began to send us "reinforcements," as they are technically called. It ended up in our having a personnel of two hundred and fifty for eight runnable vans.

Daily there were aeroplane "strafes," but very few bombs were dropped. We used to hope they would drop bombs on our derelicts—anything, anything to get rid of these long lines of idle vans on "Macedonian springs"—but they never did it. What they did do was to bring down the observation Sausage twice, though, for our entertainment, and each time the observer landed safely.

It doesn't sound much written down, and it was, of course, a commonplace in the West; but think for a moment what it means. The observer is sitting up aloft directing the fire of his guns. Suddenly an enemy 'plane appears. Observer and enemy each fire their machine-guns, but the enemy has the easier mark. He

hits the Sausage, and it bursts into flames. The observer jumps into the blue. He falls a hundred or two feet, and then the lid on a little cylinder strapped to his back is forced off by the speed of his flight. A parachute opens —and all is well ! But what about that moment when he casts himself into nothing ? And what about that hundred-foot drop waiting for the parachute to open ? Supposing it doesn't open ? Thank you. Can I be something else, please ?

The side road to our camp having become almost impassable, we received orders to shift, with nearly all our cars disabled ! The usual Army procedure followed. First all the tents were taken down and everything was packed up, then it was discovered that the site chosen was on ground reserved for the French, and the tents were put up again and the move postponed till the morrow.

There was great excitement in the village as soon as our approaching departure became known. The tins in which paraffin and petrol are supplied—large, thin, four-gallon ones—are greatly prized in the Balkans. The tinsmiths make them into all sorts of utensils, and because they are lighter and hold more the inhabitants prefer them to their picturesque native earthenware jar for water-carrying. All the children came round cadging for them, and

OUR CAMP AT NEOKAZI, AND THE "ROAD" THERETO

A TYPICAL SERBIAN TRENCH AMONG THE HILLS

their fathers and mothers begged for petrol boxes for firing, and pieces of tin Ford roofing —discarded for canvas, which stood the shaking of the roads better—to repair their shell-ruined hovels.

Among our collection of mascots and mongrels was a cat, a black and white cat, which had attached itself to us as a kitten at Bath. What she lacked in breeding she made up in personality. At our Company concerts she occupied of her own volition the centre of the stage. She would jump obstacles by invitation and play spectacularly with Mr. Scott, our mechanist sergeant-major, for half an hour every evening after tea. Naturally so accomplished a creature made havoc of the hearts of the village children, and on the day of our move some little Macedonian girl enticed her away. "Shoey"—that was her name, derived from the horse-shoe that was our Company sign—was lost! 708 was all but prostrate with lamentation and consternation. Worst of all the M.S.M. was away. He had gone to Salonica to see what he could buy for the Company's Christmas, and Shoey was his own particular pet. Who would dare to face him on his return?

Search and enquiry produced no result. Nobody in the village would admit having seen the missing animal.

Obviously the situation called for strong measures. So a message was sent that if the cat were not returned within an hour every house in the place would be razed to the ground in the most approved German manner.

The cat came back.

Another of our pets had an even more remarkable personality. This was a hen belonging to French, our hard-working, ever-cheery blacksmith. Every morning, or as nearly every morning as she could manage, she gave him an egg for his breakfast; and she spent all her time in his blacksmith's shop. There she lived and had her being. Undaunted she ranged amid his sparks, and cared not that her white plumage grew black as soot. Twenty times a day she would fly up, and perch on his shoulder or his head, and stay there while he hammered away at the red-hot metal he was desperately torturing into a front spring of sorts.

But we are in the middle of the most difficult and unpleasant of all our many moves.

Over a hundred vans, out of a hundred and thirty, were disabled for front springs, and the problem was how they were to be shifted. To keep transferring springs would be a lengthy and wearisome business. Also the few cars we had running were needed for transport, and the work must be completed before any more wet

weather made the roads even worse than they were then. We solved the problem by placing blocks of wood between the front axle and the frame, and on these "Macedonian springs," as we called them, at a pace of two miles an hour the derelicts were driven to their new home without suffering any further damage.

Once we got there, there we stuck, with long pitiful lines of disabled cars, and our blacksmiths working night and day trying to manufacture springs out of unsuitable material and too small a forge for the job. Fortunately the 1st Royal Serbian Army—the Army that had been so pleased with us that it issued a Special Order praising us with a fulsomeness that got our legs pulled wherever we went—went into rest, and didn't need us for a while. The other Ford Companies, however, working for the 2nd and 3rd Armies were experiencing the same trouble, and every day we sent all the cars we could to help to swell their numbers. Once we dropped to five, for springs went faster than we could make them, and those we made had a very short life. There was great rivalry among the companies in those days as to who could do best at the spring-making game, and it was during this period of few cars and many officers on the road that the classic definition of a Serbian dump was evolved—a bale of hay

entirely surrounded by motor transport officers !

All the time, of course, we were daily expecting a consignment of springs from England. After three months of waiting, one day the W.O. telegraphed to know if it were true that more than fifty per cent of our vehicles were out of action, and if so what was the reason ! Then, a few weeks later, a liner got through with six hundred springs on board and our spirits rose, till we found out they were rear springs !

As a matter of fact, though, the authorities did their best. There were all sorts of difficulties —Henry Ford wasn't an Ally then, and apart from trouble about deliveries there were the submarines to contend with. They were very lucky with Ford spares, getting several boat loads, and later bagging at one fell swoop the plant and stock of a big heavy repair shop for Fords which was being erected at the base.

But Christmas, 1916, must not be forgotten.

On one thing we were determined—that on Christmas Day the men should have a good time, as good a time as was possible in such a desolate land. To Salonica, as before mentioned, we sent our mechanist sergeant-major, with a long list and a comrade to help him in his thankless task. The original scheme was to have turkeys and pork, but Salonica prices

made either of these luxuries impossible. A Jew is a Cowboy with money to burn compared with a Greek who holds the market at his mercy. So the principal item had to be ration beef—roasted; and roast beef on Christmas Day cries aloud for roast potatoes. But the trouble was that we hadn't any potatoes to roast, or any tins to roast them in! Difficulty number one was got over by applying to the Serbs, always ready to do anything for the British. They sold us a sack of potatoes. And difficulty number two was surmounted by Workshops cutting up petrol tins and soldering them into baking dishes. They also put their backs into it, and made us several ovens, as until then all the Company had never had a roast at once. One section would have roast by turn and the rest stew.

So far good. But if roast beef and roast potatoes—why not Yorkshire pudding? It was a great thought—a conception such as comes very few times in a lifetime. Imagine the joy of men on Active Service in the wilds of Macedonia if they found themselves confronted with a slab of nicely browned Yorkshire!

The dream was irresistible, and the impossible was achieved. Opposition was gently and smilingly thrust aside. For once an omelet was made without breaking eggs. Eggs were

unobtainable, so was egg-powder; but flour and baking-powder were at hand, and bright brains were bent to the problem. The result was a Yorkshire cooked by being fried in a frying-pan, and stacked in the oven to keep hot till required. True it was hardly as light as mother makes it—but it went down—and no other company in the Balkans, not even at the Base, had Yorkshire pudding on Christmas Day!

Ambition was now at its usual chamois-like game. Having leapt that rock—apt simile—it sprang at another.

Christmas! mince-pies! Ye gods, why not mince-pies?

To the officers' cook went the Mess president.

"Greenhalgh," he said, "what would you say if I asked you to make 250 mince pies?"

"Nothing. I'd just have a go at 'em, sir," said the cook, bless him.

So he had a go. But, oh, the difficulties that had to be overcome! Nobody had the faintest idea of how to make mincemeat, so the Mess president had to pretend that he knew all about it.

"Ten pounds of currants, ten pounds of raisins, five pounds of sultanas, six lemons, a couple of pounds of candied peel, and twenty pounds of apples," he said glibly.

"You've left out the suet, sir," said the cook. "I'm sure there's suet in it, and brandy."

"Didn't I mention suet?" replied the swanker. "Of course there's suet—and I'll give you the brandy from the Mess when it's all mixed."

Thus was it ordained, and thus was it done. Later one heard of such things as spices, and raw meat—but what matter? In the kingdom of the blind the one-eyed man is king. There was the mincemeat; and during the whole of Christmas Eve, the officers' cooks and batmen toiled at their task of making 250 mince-pies—or rather "turnovers"—without proper conveniences, in an oven that would have given a pastry-cook paralysis.

Many other miracles were accomplished that day, among them the creation by Workshops of a shelter and a series of plank tables covered with white canvas for cloths, the making—as usual, out of petrol tins—of trays to hold oranges and nuts, and the squeezing of a hundred lemons, and the dissolving of the requisite quantity of sugar by the doctor between 10.30 and midnight.

The day began with a church service—a pukka church parade—with every one unnaturally smart, and the officers carrying sticks and gloves. After that came sports for money

prizes, a most popular feature, provocative of much amusement to all concerned. But at two came the chief item of the day—dinner!

Years hence, no doubt, the Mess president's horror-of-the-hoardings will ask: "What did you do in the Great War, daddy?"

"My son," he will reply, "I achieved the impossible. Within sound of the enemy's guns, a hundred and fifty miles from the Base, far away from all shops, and destitute of all conveniences, thanks to the willing help of many cheerful comrades I ran a Christmas Day for our Company, the memory of which still quickens the beat of my poor old heart."

"What did they have to eat, daddy?" the hoarding-horror will doubtless inquire.

"Child," the answer will be, "they had roast beef, boiled potatoes, Yorkshire pudding, and thick gravy."

There will be no need to tell him that roast potatoes were arranged for, but that the solder in the tins made by the Workshops started to run, the Mess president was busy with the rest at the sports, and so the Company cooks made a change in the menu on their own responsibility. That was the only flaw in a perfect day, and it may as well be kept dark.

"And what did they have for 'after,' daddy?" Sir Hedley le Bas' darling will demand.

"For 'after,' son? Well, first there was Christmas pudding, supplied by the readers of the *Daily Telegraph* and *Daily News*—and very excellent puddings they were! Then, son, there were mince-pies—the pride of father's heart, the glory of 708, and the thing that beat the rest of the M.T. in the Balkans to a frazzle. Wait a minute, don't interrupt, Hedley—there's lots more to come!" I have decided that he shall be called Hedley. "Up and down the long table there were heaps of oranges, figs, and nuts in embossed silver dishes hall-marked with the names Shell and Pratt. Other tins circulated with lemonade and beer—yes, beer, boy, brought up in a barrel on which we had to deposit two pounds ten! And for every guest there was also a packet of cigarettes and a cigar. Now run away and play, Hedley! I'm tired of you!"

The sergeants carved and waited and a Boche aeroplane flew over the camp just as the feast was concluded.

In spite of that dinner the sports were resumed and among the items was a strenuous football match—Workshops *v.* Sections. The Sections won—by superior play or poetical justice. There was a rumour knocking about that Workshops had contrived to get more than their share of the pudding. How much truth

(or pudding) there was in it (or them) was never discovered. But at an uproarious Company concert on Boxing Night the great feature of the evening was the query during every interval in the proceedings :

" Who pinched the pudding ? "

And the reply, not *pianissimo :*

" Workshops ! "

It was a great day, tinged now and then of course with memories of other Christmases and yearnings for other companions, but a merry Christmas none the less. The only real disappointment about it was the failure of the mail. Our Christmas letters and parcels did not arrive till January 7th, in spite of most of them having been posted before the day officially decreed.

# THE SERBIAN CAMPAIGN

## A REMINDER

PTE. SMITH MAKES A FEW REMARKS ABOUT HIS FRIENDS, THE SERBS

THE blinkin' War was spread so bloomin' wide
That bits of it kep' getting lost or strayed.
You ain't 'eard much at 'ome about our side—
The Sal-o-nica Army got mislaid!
'Course things in such a War can't *all* go right
An' often 'tisn't "tattics" to explain;
But still it seems to me it's only right
You 'eard about the Serbs and their campaign.

You thinks you knows about 'em, but you don't;
Or, rather, you 'ave sort of 'alf forgot;
An', though they could remind you, well, they won't—
So 'ere's a bloke what means to 'ave a shot!
We've worked among 'em now two years an' more,
Attached because they 'adn't no M.T.,
And if they didn't win the blinkin' War—
Well, 'tain't no fault of theirs—take that from me!

The Serbos, when they're scrappin', fight like 'ell;
Look 'ow they give the Orstrins socks alone;
An' shoved 'em back, not once, but twice as well—
A little Baulking State all on their own!
Look 'ow they made their wonderful Retreat!
Though left, they didn't chuck their 'ands in then;
But, though they 'adn't anythink to eat,
They fell back fighting, hinch by hinch, like Men!

What's more, they're just as loyal as they're brave ;
  Look 'ow they let the Bulgars mobilize !
*They* knew 'ow Foxy Ferdy would be'ave—
  *We* messed about an' shut our bloomin' eyes !
They 'ad their chance to strike a knock-out blow,
  But, being Alleys, arst permission first ;
An' we—oh ! God forgive us !—we said, " No,"
  An' didn't 'elp 'em when the storm-cloud burst !

You don't forgit about the Belgian's wrongs
  (Poor blighter ! 'eaven knows 'e copped it bad !),
But quite as deep a symperfy belongs
  To Serbia, whose woes is just as sad !
Old Serbo fairly got it in the neck—
  The 'Un's a saint to what them Bulgars did !
They made 'is 'appy 'ome a 'opeless wreck,
  An' 'ardly spared a woman or a kid !

'E looks on all the British as 'is friend,
  'E loves us, though I'm blessed if I know why ;
Like us, 'e swore to stick it to the end,
  Or till there was no more of 'im to die !
An' what us chaps out 'ere wants understood
  Is, now at last this rotten War is won,
Because we've all made pals with 'im for good,
  It's up to us to see as 'e ain't " done " !

## CHAPTER V

### INTO THE BREACH ONCE MORE

AMONG all the nations involved in this ghastly conflict, pride of place for sacrifice and glory must in the final judgment go ungrudgingly to the Serbs. No people has been so consistently and thrillingly fine. History knows no instance of equal splendour. Theirs is a story that no adjectives can do justice to, a story so noble that praise is an impertinence; and yet, in spite of all that has been written about it, swamped in the horrors and difficulties of Armageddon, it has never taken a real hold of the popular imagination.

To the Pan-German Empire in Europe that was ultimately to lead to world domination Serbia was a gate resolutely barred, right across the high road, with keepers from whom no bribery could buy the key. She was not the excuse for the War; she was the vital spot. On the integrity of this little nation with the big Soul depended the safety of the world. And she knew it, if most of the rest of the world was

blind. The Allied newspapers and Parliamentary debates of 1914 will afford much entertainment to the historians of the future.

Keeping her temper with admirable fortitude when, after the murder at Sarajevo, Austria launched her impertinent ultimatum, Serbia was ready to sacrifice everything but that passionate love of Right and Independence which are more to her than life itself, to secure the peace of the world. But her efforts were in vain. The mask came off. Armageddon dawned.

On paper she was exhausted—an enemy utterly "contemptible." Since the autumn of 1912 this tiny nation had waged two wars and quelled a formidable rising. She had only been at peace for nine months. What could these three millions of exhausted peasants do against the might of Austria-Hungary?

By the 21st August, 1914, the Austrian-Hungarians knew, and in September the dose was repeated. David had downed his Goliath twice. Everywhere else the sky was black for the Allies, but in Serbia the sun shone clear and bright.

The Allies, beset and bemuddled, said "Bravo!" and forgot; and after six weeks' nursing, humiliated Austria-Hungary came on again. This time they pushed the Serbians back

—at a price. Short of artillery and ammunition, they were obliged to surrender Valievo and evacuate Belgrade, their beloved capital. But not for long. Ammunition was got to them, and on December 3rd, 1914, they began again. By the 15th they were once again in Belgrade ; five Austrian Army Corps were in retreat and another campaign had been added to the world's military wonders. Austria had lost three hundred thousand men, of whom sixty-eight thousand were prisoners, besides vast stores and fighting material ; lost all this to a peasant army which had already been at war for more than two years, a peasant army that came from its neglected fields and ruined homes in voluntary driblets, " taking time-off " for the fighting, a peasant army which somehow " found the strength to rise from the depths of despair and to shatter the overwhelming forces of a well-equipped and disciplined enemy."

Surely these Serbs must count among the unluckiest of nations ? As if they had not already suffered enough, there followed a terrible epidemic of typhus and cholera, started by sick Austrian prisoners scattered among the Serbian villages. Its ravages, as all the world knows, were appalling, but even in the midst of her fight against disease she was obliged to start again to gird up her loins to meet the

mighty onslaught preparing against her. She knew that Germany must have Serbia, whatever the cost, that Serbia was ten times more important to the German scheme than Paris; and, bruised with battle, enfeebled by sickness, and short of food though she was, she faced without panic the prospect of war to the death.

Serbia knew the enemy's plans and her treacherous neighbour's perfidy. Always she insisted that Bulgaria was already bought and meant to attack her. But the Allies persisted in believing that Bulgaria could be bought by them—at the expense of Serbia, Greece, and Rumania! Serbia agreed to the price for the sake of the Cause. And then, when the terms were refused and there was no longer any doubt of Bulgaria's intentions, she demanded permission to attack the traitor who was secretly mobilizing against her. This was refused, and Serbia bowed to the desire of the Allies to keep their honour clean. Help was promised her—immediate and sufficient help. It arrived in October—six weeks too late and ten times too little to be of any use! To add to the irony of the situation, Russia, who had been loudest in her declarations that Bulgaria would never enter a war against her, refused a Serbian request for men, of whom she had plenty, to be

equipped and armed by the Serbians themselves with the rifles and ammunition they had captured from the Austrians.

The Serbians set their teeth. Germany had offered them peace—independence guaranteed by Austria, and access to the sea thrown in—a tempting bait to dangle before a beset and starving nation who knew only too well that it was in its death throes. But the answer was no—rather let us die now in the hope that some day Serbia may be born again than be traitors to the Allies' cause and another patch on the black Pan-German map!

There followed that terrible retreat, that miracle of human determination. After forty days of desperate, outnumbered fighting and cruel losses and grave shortage of food, they fell back through the mountains of Montenegro and Albania in winter, destroying all that they could not take with them. Guns, waggons, stores, motor-cars and motor-lorries, and all the customary impedimenta of an army—none of these things could be got through that barrier of inhospitable mountains; practically everything had to be blown up, burnt, or buried. Civilians, prisoners, soldiers, and horses struggled together through the snow and blazed their trail with dead. Twenty thousand boy-recruits—the nation's hope—lay down for ever

on that grisly march, while the rest plodded on and on and on, with only their fierce-flaming patriotism to warm and sustain them; these barbarians, whom—God forgive us!—we had been wont to sneer at because some among them had murdered a king and queen who wanted to sell them to the arch-enemy's satellite!

There were women and children in that pitiful throng—it was a nation rather than an army that was retreating—and, of course, most of the women and children died. Very few civilians got through, but about a hundred and fifty thousand soldiers, including nine or ten thousand who managed to get down to Salonica, survived that journey, approximately a half of those who set out upon it. A hundred and fifty thousand of them struggled through, many racked by dysentery, typhus, and cholera—all of them starving. It is impossible to write calmly of this glorious rabble, who need never have endured one pang of all this suffering. In all the world nobody could have blamed them if they had given in. The friends who had promised to help them had mis-counselled them and failed them. The enemy had overwhelmed them. It was winter. For the sake of their country and their women and children they would have been fully justified in making Peace. But they spurned the very thought. Just think

of it quietly for a moment—the path they might have taken and the path they took, among the snow and the goat tracks and the precipices and the bitter winds, without food or proper clothing, staggering, staggering on. And then with quickened pulse and a thrilling heart let us acknowledge them for all time as among the salt of the earth !

Arrived at the littoral, dreaming of food and rest under the protection of the Allies they had served so loyally, they found only another disappointment awaiting them. There was a British Mission and a French Mission and an Italian Mission, and all of them did their best, and the British Mission, under General Taylor, made particularly strenuous efforts to feed and clothe those foot-sore, exhausted, and half-demented heroes. But the curse of too late was over everything. There had been no time to make efficient and sufficient arrangements. The original plan had been that they should rest and reorganize on the Albanian littoral. But it was discovered that the coast was unhealthy, that supplies could not be obtained locally, and that the enemy was threatening ; there were, in fact, all sorts of difficulties and complications, including the Italian attitude, and the long and short of it was that this remnant of the Serbian Army was compelled to move on the Way of

Suffering again, on a further heart-breaking six-days' march through roadless swamps to Valona by way of Durazzo. On that last march —the straw which ought to and yet somehow did not break the camel's back—it is some comfort to know that the British, French, and Italian Missions did splendid work for these helpless, hungry, half-naked men.

Somehow or other they reached Valona, after leaving more dead by the way, many dying as a result of eating too much after their long period of starvation and exhaustion—an indomitable band who had sacrificed all to the knowledge that so long as they existed as an army the liberation and union of the whole Serbian race was still a dream that might some day come true. And from Valona, as soon as possible, they were shipped to Corfu by the Italians, fortunately, in spite of attacks by submarines, without the loss of a single Serb at sea.

The condition in which they reached Corfu can only be described as one of utter exhaustion. Never before had so many and such pitiful wrecks of men been seen. One cannot think of them without a lump in the throat, and one can only regret that after all their terrible sufferings they should have had at first some considerable hardships still to bear even when they reached Corfu. The organization was not complete, and

to add to their misfortunes the weather was particularly vile.

Thousands died. When the struggle was all over, when the impossible had been achieved, thousands of those poor overstrained bodies found they had reached the haven of rest only to make a glorious, separate, Eternal Peace.

But Peace was very far from the thoughts of the comrades they had left behind. For a little while they rested, and the Crown Prince of Serbia and M. Pashitch, the Prime Minister, went to Paris. There at a conference with the Allies they proudly proclaimed that Serbia had no intention of being counted out of the struggle. All that was tangible might have been lost, but something intangible and splendid still remained—the Spirit of the Southern Slav that had survived four hundred years of Turkish oppression, and that all the might of Germany and Austria could not crush. For that age-old dream of a Greater Serbia they were eager to go into the field again.

They wanted nobody to fight for them; to the last man they were ready and willing to fight for themselves.

Details were arranged. The French were to provide rifles and artillery; and munitions, transport, supplies, and equipment were to be equally shared by France and Britain. Given

these things, the Serbs would refit, and rest till the spring. They asked no longer in spite of all that they had been through and in spite of the fact that they had been at war since 1912. By the spring of 1916, supported by the Allies, they would be ready to set out to reconquer their beloved Serbia.

In April the first instalment of this indefatigable army was landed in Salonica, having come all the way by sea. Greece, Serbia's ally, still under Constantine, in a sudden access of neutral probity, had refused them the use of her railways, which would have shortened the journey and reduced its dangers. But in spite of this, not a man was lost. Just as skilfully as the Italians had transported them to Corfu, so now the French brought them to Salonica, assisted by British torpedo boats and trawlers, who patrolled and swept the seas before the transports. By the end of May an army of ninety thousand fighting men, second to none for valour and the will to win, had been landed at Mikra Bay.

Up to then, excepting for the Adriatic Mission and certain A.S.C. Units and Staff Officers at Corfu, very few British had come into contact with the Serbs. But directly they arrived at Salonica there sprang up a mutual and spontaneous friendship between the two nations

which time has only served to cement. There was something about these nobly simple soldiers, who had given up everything and never talked about it, who could still smile though they had been robbed of their country and their homes and were tortured underneath by a sickly fear of what might be happening to their loved ones in Austrian-Bulgarian hands, that went straight to the British heart. Tommy, a child himself, loves children, and this was a race of brave babies—delightful, unexpected, straight, and transparent, shrewd and simple as babies are ; something unique and lovable, and withal strong and "White" all through—a race that meant business and was out to kill but never said so, and grew as glum and dumb as Tommy himself when invited to describe their achievements, or else talked about their friends. Never before have two nations "taken to each other" as Serb and Briton did in those early days in Salonica, in spite of the language difficulty. The medium of communication for the officers, of course, was French, and it is a difficult question whether Serbian-French or British-French is the more atrocious to the Parisian ear. Both, generally speaking, eliminate the nasal sounds altogether as too much bother ; and the Briton says "oo" and the Serb "ee" for the French "u," and neither

has the slightest respect for the proper place for the pronouns. The simple soldiers had not even this assistance, but it made no difference. They were satisfied to be in each other's company, and conversation at first consisted of an occasional "Good old Serb," and "Dobro British"—Serbo's polite way of saying "You're another."

It was the same from the highest to the lowest. From the King, the Crown Prince, Prince George—a picturesque figure with a passion for old clothes and exposing himself to danger—and the generals, right down to the unshaven older men, the Cheechas, who led the pack mules, they all loved the British and the British loved them, and neither of them really knew why.

Their relations with the French were not quite so cordial. In spite of the general application of the term "insular" to the British, the French are really much more insular, although France may not be an island. The ordinary Frenchman never travels, nor does he mix with any but his immediate neighbours. Paris is and is not France, just as London is and is not England. The Parisian may be a man of the world, but the average Frenchman is a man only of *la belle patrie*. His conduct in this ghastly war has earned him for all time the

title of " Magnificent "—but magnificence is not tact. He has not the British gift for dealing with other peoples. With the best of intentions he rubbed the Serbs the wrong way. His methods were both a little too arbitrary and a little too commercial. He was not their friend so much as their master and their merchant. And the result was that, though for many things they admired him and were grateful to him, they did not, as a whole, love him.

All this, however, is merely by way of introduction to what is not very correctly known as the Battle of Ostrovo, the first engagement in which the reconstituted Serbian Armies took part.

On May 4th the French had occupied Florina, one hundred and thirty kilometres from Salonica and thirty kilometres south of Monastir, a picturesque Macedonian town situated at the foot of one of the grimmest tangles of mountains to be found in this part of the Balkans. There was a pass of sorts through this range—Pisoderi—whose character is best indicated by the fact that it was regularly travelled by a long caravan of camels strung together and led by a donkey. Later, by a veritable engineering triumph, this track was made into a road possible for motor-lorries, which passed on into Albania and the coast by way of Koritsa, a road

that for views and thrills is undoubtedly among the most picturesque and interesting in Europe.

On the 26th May the first troops of the reorganized Serbian Army took up their positions to the west of Florina, occupying the line Florina–Chechevo–Link. These troops were the Volunteer Corps, Serbs by birth but enemy subjects by circumstance, a splendid body of men influenced by the purest patriotism. Their task was to protect the Allied Army's left wing and to prevent communication between the Greeks and Bulgars south of Lake Prespa, as it was known that a great deal of smuggling and spying was going on between the Greeks and the enemy. Four to five hundred pack animals laden with food-stuffs were crossing between Lerin and Karchia every day and going to Albania via Podgradez and Mokropolje. All this was promptly stopped by the Serbian Volunteers, who, although only two thousand strong, held a line of about forty kilometres, far away from the Base and practically isolated from the Serbian Armies.

An incident that occurred in July is very illuminating. A battalion of Jugo-Slavs, under the famous Lt.-Col. Popovitch, nicknamed the Wolf, was sent to Karchia to bar all enemy intercourse with Albania by way of Koritsa, and to reinforce the Volunteer Corps who were

still holding this sector. The Serbians had learned from a Venizelist that secret telephonic communication existed from Monastir by way of Resna, Stegne, Kalabaka, and Larissa to Athens itself. This line was tapped by the Wolf in the neighbourhood of Biklista, where he had the pleasure of listening to a conversation between Athens and Stegne conducted partly in Greek, which he did not understand, and partly in German, which he did. Naturally that line was promptly cut—and the Germanophil Greek Prefect, Panas, actually had the impudence to protest (1) against the Serbians having listened to his conversation and (2) unkindly preventing him from passing on any more information to the enemy! It was also discovered that up till now there had been a regular courier service between Monastir and Athens, the people in the secret about this telephone line putting up couriers on their journeys.

Meanwhile, the Serbian Army was gradually moving to the Front, eager to "have another slap at the enemy," and very proud of their nice new clothes and equipment. All their suffering was forgotten, or, rather, put aside. War had become a habit to them by now, and the taking back of their beloved country an *idée fixe*.

Their forces were divided into three armies, the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd. By the beginning of August each of these armies had divisions at the Front, the 1st round Goumendza, the 2nd in the Moglena District, and the 3rd in the Ostrovo–Banitsa–Florina sector. There were four divisions and the Volunteers in the first line, two divisions in the second, and the remainder in reserve. The Cavalry were still in camp, east of Salonica, except the 2nd Regiment, which was protecting the railway line to Florina. There had been a little not very important fighting in the meantime, and the line now held was roughly parallel to the Serbo-Greek frontier, which the Bulgars had held since their capture of Monastir in the black days of November, 1915. In some places the Serbs were separated from the enemy by contingents of Greek frontier guards; in some they were actually in touch, and in others there was a mountainous no man's land between them. The occupation of this long and difficult line, indeed, was mainly tentative, a matter of advanced posts and starting points, preparatory to the so often delayed Allied offensive which had been in the air ever since we moved out of the Bird Cage.

On the 31st July a demonstration attack was ordered. Rumania was still hesitating and

Russia had not yet been found out. This attack, which was dying down on the 2nd of August because the rest of the Allies were not ready, was ordered to continue on that day in the hope of influencing Rumania. As, however, it was not backed up by the Allies, it came to an end on August 4th.

The delays as regards the Allied offensive are very understandable. Some were caused by the Allied War Council and the state of affairs in the West; others by the series of time-taking changes of front between the French and the British; transport troubles connected with the maintenance of a large force overseas; the unwearying obstruction of King Constantine and his friends; sickness among the troops; lack of roads and shortage of artillery—all these things hindered the launching of the Allied blow, and gave the enemy a chance he was not slow to take advantage of.

Mackensen's methods on our left flank were very similar to those employed simultaneously on our right. On the 17th of August, the day when his surprise offensive commenced all along the line, the Greek guards on the front treacherously withdrew and left the weak detachments of Serbians round about Florina at his mercy. The enemy came on secretly in the early morning, advancing in two columns,

one along the railway and the other by tracks over the hills, guided by neutral Greek gendarmes in uniform—an outrage to which the Allies submitted all too tamely. Taken thus by surprise and hopelessly outnumbered, the Volunteer Corps and the advance guard of the Danube Division were obliged to fall back, after making the enemy pay as dearly as they could, and the Bulgars occupied Florina station, three miles from the town. Rumour has it that the position of the station is explained by the fact that when the line was built the Turks were still top-dog, and a powerful local Pasha insisted upon its present site because that was handiest to his personal property in the district. The same thing appears to have happened all over Macedonia!

The result of this preliminary Bulgarian success was that the Serbian troops west of Florina, mostly Jugo-Slav Volunteers, found themselves cut off. They refused to surrender and fell back southwards through the mountains, hiding by day and making their way secretly at night with great difficulty and much hardship.

Meanwhile, on the eastern end of the Serbian sector the enemy also made another attack on the 17th. The frontier line here runs through a range of high and difficult mountains, twisting and turning in all directions as only Mace-

donian mountains can. At their foot is the broad plain of the Moglena. The Bulgars were on top, and between Pojar and Strupino they made an attempt to debouch upon the plain, which, if successful, would have turned the Vodena Pass, and been a dangerous threat to the west and north. Here, however, they more than met their match. They retired hurriedly, leaving four hundred dead upon the ground, and encouraged by this initial success the Serbian right made a push on its own account and succeeded, in spite of violent counter-attacks, in improving its position.

The Serbian left, however, was still in difficulties. Outnumbered in men and outclassed in armament, the Danube Division of the Third Army had been driven back to the environs of Banitsa, a village among another tangle of hills, fiercely contesting every inch of the ground they yielded. Banitsa, however, had to be given up, and Gornichevo, Eksisu and Sorovitch followed. Nine field guns and some ammunition limbers had to be left by the Danube Division at Gornichevo, not because their retreat was in any sense a rout, but simply on account of the impossibly bad roads which did not permit them to be taken away.

Once more the luck of the Serbs was dead out. Taken by surprise and outnumbered, especially

in artillery, right at the beginning of their new campaign, they were once more called upon to suffer and endure. The weather was appallingly hot ; the surface was solid rock coated with a thin covering of earth baked to the consistency of iron. Trenches were out of the question. The only possible protection was stone shelters, which splintered freely, and largely increased the numbers of their wounded. But the greatest drawback of all was a lack of water. During those torrid days, fighting desperately among those shadeless hills, determined to fall back no farther, they suffered agonies from thirst ; while all the time the waters of Lake Ostrovo, on which their left wing leant, gleamed tantalizingly beneath them.

The position was critical. Reinforcements were being hurried up as fast as possible, but as usual in the Balkans the trouble was the lack of roads. The French in particular, owing to this lack of roads and bridges, experienced the greatest difficulty in getting up their sorely needed artillery. At one time it looked as if the Third Army must be cut off, especially when the enemy captured Pateli. Soon, however, the reinforcements began to make themselves felt.

On August 19th the Vardar Division of the general reserve began to arrive at Ostrovo from Verte Kop by rail, and was thrown into the

fray south of the Danube Division, near Pateli. An infantry brigade of the Timok Division, and the rest of the Vardar Division arrived on the 22nd, and were joined by the Volunteers, who all this while had been steadily pursuing their furtive retreat through the hills. This composite force successfully prevented the lake being turned from the south.

On August 23rd the Bulgar progress was arrested; and, though several serious assaults were made by the enemy on the 24th, they were all successfully beaten back. On that day their offensive was definitely stopped, and there followed only a few weak attacks of local significance.

Meanwhile, the French had sent an infantry regiment and two brigades of artillery to reinforce the Third Army, but as they did not arrive until the 29th, when there was no need for them, they were not engaged.

On the whole, in spite of the courage and determination with which their offensive had been pushed, and in spite of their preponderance in men and guns, the Bulgarian gains were spectacular rather than practical. True, the Third Army had been driven back a considerable distance, but the enemy had not gained either of his objectives. A captured Bulgarian Order showed that their aim was to take at any cost

all the heights north and west of Ostrovo, and to push the troops of the Second Army from the hills to the plain of Moglena. But, thanks to the powerful resistance of the Third Army and the measures taken for its reinforcement, the heights above Lake Ostrovo remained in the Serbian's hands; and instead of having been driven into the Moglena plain the Second Army had pushed the enemy back and improved its own position.

## CHAPTER VI

### INCH BY INCH

MACEDONIA as a whole is a series of mountains in mazes rather than ranges, with extensive plains at their feet. The result of the Bulgarian offensive had been to push the Serbian Left off the Monastir plain and on to the Malkanidje heights, while the Centre was held up before the crests of Starkov Grob, through which the frontier line ran; and the Right confronted the continuation of this barrier of hills by Pojar, Vetrenik, and Fushtani. No more generally difficult and unfavourable line could possibly be imagined. The Bulgars had all the highest points, and in this roadless, mountainous region, exposed to observation and weak in artillery, yet once more the unlucky Serbs found themselves "up against it."

But the last thing they thought of was staying where they were. Undismayed by their initial misfortunes, their one idea was to push on again, and take Monastir. The obvious line of least resistance was to attempt a fresh

debouch upon the Monastir plain, if only the enemy could be driven off the heights by Gornichevo.

General Sarrail sent General Cordonnier and the French 57th and 156th Divisions and one Russian brigade by Verria and Kozana to co-operate with the Serbians in a movement from the south in the direction of Kuylar, Eksisu, and Florina, while the Serbian Third Army, under General Vassitch, which, in the meantime, had been reinforced by the First Army, under Field-Marshal (Voivode) Mishitch, attacked the enemy from the east. The Serbian objective was the pushing of the enemy from the Gornichevo heights, and the Franco-Russian objectives were the cutting of the enemy's communications with Greece, and the enfolding of his right wing. The Bulgars facing the Danube and Vardar Divisions, realizing that further successes were impossible, and finding their position on the slopes of hills of which the Serbians held the crest extremely inconvenient, had meanwhile withdrawn their main forces to organized positions on the Malkanidje Ridge.

The British were now in position on their ninety-mile front from the Vardar to the sea, and on September 11th they heavily bombarded the Machukovo sector. General Milne in his

dispatch says: "On the Doiran–River Vardar front there remained as before the whole of the Bulgarian 9th Division, less one regiment, a brigade of the 2nd Division, and at least two-thirds of the German 101st Division, which had entrenched the salient north of Machukovo on the usual German system. To assist the general offensive by the Allies I ordered this salient to be attacked at the same time as the Allied operations in the Florina area commenced. With this object in view the whole of the enemy's entrenched position was subjected to a heavy bombardment from the 11th to 13th September, the south-west corner of the salient, known as the Piton des Mitrailleuses, being specially selected for destruction. The enemy's position was occupied during the night 13th–14th, after a skilfully-planned and gallant assault, in which the King's Liverpool Regiment and Lancashire Fusiliers specially distinguished themselves. Over two hundred Germans were killed in the work, chiefly by bombing, and seventy-one prisoners were brought in. During the 14th, the enemy concentrated from three directions a very heavy artillery fire, and delivered several counter-attacks, which were for the most part broken up under the fire of our guns. Some of the enemy, however, succeeded in forcing an entrance into the work,

and severe fighting followed. As hostile reinforcements were increasing in numbers, and as the rocky nature of the ground rendered rapid consolidation difficult, the troops were withdrawn in the evening to their original line, the object of the attack having been accomplished. This withdrawal was conducted with little loss, thanks to the very effective fire of the artillery."

Meanwhile on the Franco-Serbian front a general attack had been ordered for September 12th, but, after the artillery preparation had been completed and the Serbian infantry was ready to be launched, it was found that General Cordonnier's group was late and had not succeeded in taking the starting positions assigned to it. The bombardment was continued on the 13th and local attacks made; and then General Sarrail informed Serbian Headquarters that the enemy was in full retreat before General Cordonnier, and ordered the Serbs to push forward as hard as they could. Accordingly, an attack was ordered at dawn for all the troops in the Gornichevo sector. This attack was vigorously pressed, in spite of the difficulties of the country, and was completely successful. The Bulgars were put to flight in disorder, their retreat became a rout, and many prisoners and guns and much valuable material were

captured. It was a Victory with a capital V ; a victory won not by artillery, which was very scarce, but by the hard fighting and splendid courage of the "simple" soldier, who leapt out of his stone shelter on the hills and panted over the rocks and through the ravines under a blazing September sun, carrying all before him. But, unfortunately, it was not exploited, as the Serbs had every right and reason to expect that it would be. General Cordonnier's group, entangled in the hills, was not in time to capture the beaten Bulgars fleeing in disorder. By this belatedness a wonderful opportunity to get the enemy between the hammer and the anvil was lost, and the Bulgars were given time to organize a new resistance and establish themselves again in strong positions on the frontier line, the breaking of which later cost the Allies, and particularly the Serbs, very, very dearly.

General Cordonnier was replaced, and the Serbs are fully justified in asserting that the credit for the brilliant operation by which the Bulgars were driven off the heights by Gornichevo belongs solely to their armies. The French, of course, had much to be said for them. They were fighting in difficult country, in a style of warfare to which they were unaccustomed, amid great heat and over roads so

impossibly bad that they must be seen to be realized.

Defeated at Gornichevo, the Bulgars fell back right to the frontier line, already strongly fortified, and the Serbs found themselves faced with a problem which might well have daunted even their war-like spirit. Kaymachalan, the highest point in the mountain maze of Starkov Grob, loomed before them, grim, black, and forbidding. Snow-crowned, 8284 feet high, it was the key to the whole position—a natural fortress, apparently impregnable. The Bulgars were on the top, in force, and who sat on the top of Kaymachalan absolutely dominated the next stage of the road to Monastir. The enemy understood its significance exactly ; their orders to the troops on Kaymachalan were that it was to be held at any cost. The Serbian Third Army also understood its significance. It was the chief barrier between them and their beloved Serbia. The summit was their frontier line ; on the other side *was* Serbia ! Therefore Kaymachalan had to be taken, and taken it was in spite of the numerous reinforcements sent to save it.

It was a hard and amazing fight, a story to thrill the blood, an incident that even the greatness of this complicated War will not crowd into oblivion, a triumph worthy of the

nation that came through Albania in winter rather than bow the knee before the might of the Hun.

Only those who have actually seen Kaymachalan gauntly towering to the snows can properly appreciate the Serbian achievement. Only those who have laboured up its sides and looked at the thousands of dead and the litter and wreck of the spent fight can really grasp the heroism of that glorious adventure.

Half-way up there is a beech forest, but after that it is only rocks and more rocks, a bare, steep wilderness that ends in snow that only melts for a few weeks in the middle of summer.

In late September it is bitterly cold up there, and a fierce biting wind rages almost without cessation.

General Vassitch was in command, a stout, cheery soldier, all grimness and iron underneath. The artillery preparation was not on a Western scale—there was never any real "weight" on either side in the Balkans, for the country made big guns impossible.

In full view of the enemy, in little rushes, now fifty, now a hundred yards, the Serbians advanced, dragging their field guns and mortars with them. The price was terrible, but nothing could stop them. Bomb, rifle, shell or stone splinter, it was all the same—"one down,

t'other come up"—on, on, always on, drawn by the magnet of those white stones on the top that marked the Serbian boundary.

Various engagements were going on during this time on the rest of the Serbian Front, but Kaymachalan rightly occupied the centre of the stage. On Kaymachalan everything depended. The real attack began on the 12th September, and from then onwards continued day and night. The Bulgars put up a splendid fight, and by no means rested merely on the defensive. Besides hitting hard in other directions, they attacked and counter-attacked again and again, and many times the Serbs were obliged to yield the ground so hardly gained. There was, in short, equal fury and determination on both sides.

On the 12th, the Drinska Division took the foremost position of the Kaymachalan mass, and by the 18th the same division had gained a portion of the highest point. On the 19th, the enemy attacked on the whole Serbian Front, and counter-attacked with great violence on Kaymachalan. The French and the rest of the Serbian troops fought with great valour and varying fortune, and on Kaymachalan the Drinska Division just managed to hold its own. On the 26th, however, after much confused fighting everywhere in the meantime, in spite of

their heroic resistance, the Drinska Division was driven back and the highest point was again in the enemy's hands.

But not to remain there. The Serbian official account of their operations contains this grim note for September 27th: "Order given to prepare general, definite and energetic attack for the 30th Sept."

The result of that "general, definite and energetic attack" was that the Drinska Division retook the summit; though on the rest of the Front, after a desperate fight, the enemy maintained his positions.

On the 1st October, the Drinska Division enlarged its successes on Kaymachalan, and the Danube Division did some fine work among the crests of Starkov Grob. On the 2nd the attacks still went on. The Third Army took the south-west point of Kaymachalan, and the mountain positions of Starkov Grob and Starkov Zub. This, with the results of the First Army's attacks, brought about a general enemy retreat. For the second time the Bulgar was in full flight—and Kaymachalan was firmly in Serbian hands.

The impossible had been achieved afresh by this nation of warriors whose lot in this War has always been the impossible. Hell raged no more on Kaymachalan; one of the grimmest

fights in history was finished. Now there was peace among the snow, the peace of death, and onlookers struggled up and wondered. In one place hundreds of Bulgars had been driven over a steep cliff, pushed over at the bayonet's point, and their bodies at its foot for many days rendered mute and terrible testimony to the awful determination of the Serbs. Aerial torpedoes, bombs, broken rifles, equipment—all the debris of a big fight, and dead and dead and dead in Serbo-French blue or Bulgar brown told their own tale.

Nobody with the Serbian Armies will ever forget the light in the eyes of all ranks after that amazing victory. Unaffectedly they were proud and pleased; proud of their fresh-won laurels and their noble dead, and pleased because a Serbian Army was on Serbian soil once more. Everybody talked of Monastir, and then Belgrade. Both seemed very near.

The net result of all this fighting and the taking of Kaymachalan was that the Bulgars fell back on the Cerna River, their second line of defence, and, with a lengthened line, both French and Serbs found the problem of communications even more difficult to grapple with.

There was only one single-track railway—the Salonica–Monastir Railway—and that was very badly graded and woefully deficient in rolling

stock. By the British–Serbian hospitals at Verte Kop, where it first begins to climb into the mountains after leaving Salonica, the gradient was so steep that often two engines in front and one behind failed to get the trains up. At this spot, too, trains proceeding to Salonica had a nasty habit of running away, in spite of their brakes, and after three bad accidents a special siding was constructed for them to run themselves up-hill again to a standstill. But this was all that could be done. The nature of the country was such that the line could neither be doubled here nor the gradient improved.

As if this wretched, single-track line were not difficult enough for the Allies to contend with, Nature herself suddenly took a hand at obstructing them. The railway ran beside Lake Ostrovo, a beautiful sheet of water with tiny islands here and there and the remains of a submerged village plainly to be seen in its crystal depths. Separated from Lake Ostrovo by a quite respectable strip of rocky country was a smaller lake, and suddenly this began visibly to shrink, while, at the same time, Lake Ostrovo began to rise. The baby lake had commenced to drain into the bigger one by a subterranean channel, and soon it was quite dry, and Lake Ostrovo had risen several feet.

To the Allies this natural phenomenon was more annoying than interesting. Their one precious single-track railway, which ran for some distance by the side of the lake, was in grave danger of being washed away. The situation was most serious and alarming. Daily, in the middle of a series of important military operations, that rising water, creeping nearer and nearer to the railway, was a most unpleasant sight. Hurriedly all available hands were put to work to construct a deviation, and the business became a race between the lake and the labourers. The new line was finished in the very nick of time, the last trains on the old one running with their wheels awash.

Naturally a single-track railway short of rolling stock, and exceptionally difficult to work into the bargain, became, in the circumstances, unavoidably and appallingly congested. As a result motor transport became more important than ever, and though at first it was thought essential that motor transport must have roads, and good roads, to work on, in the end it had to learn to do without them! There were no roads.

Incredible though it may seem, in these days there was between Salonica and Monastir only one road-route, the remains of the old Roman via Egnatia. If Mr. Macadam ever had night-

LAKE OSTROVO

A MACEDONIAN MARKET

mares, he must have dreamed of some such road as this was. It ran across the plain from Salonica in a series of stretches of mud and rocks and sand and marsh. Such bridges as existed were either unsafe or too narrow, but most had merely been allowed to cave in. Beside it were alternative tracks cut through the fields by ox-carts when the surface became too bad even for them. It climbed into the hills by Vodena, taking a dozen or so streams in its stride, heedless of gradients, mixing itself up among the trees of that charming and well-wooded district, and taking its bends at an angle which was good enough for a slow-moving ox-cart but impossible for a motor vehicle. Then it fell down the hills on the other side somehow, anyhow, with rocky ruts over a foot deep, and its surface always an inclined plane, till it lost itself in the infamous Ostrovo sands. From the other side it climbed again up the Gornichevo Pass, through gorgeous scenery, but without the slightest consideration for tyres or engines.

In places the Pass was almost twelve feet wide, with terrific drops on either side or both, and there two lines of traffic were comparatively comfortable. But in many other places it was only from six to eight feet wide—and the vehicles coming down couldn't stop because it

was so steep, and the vehicles going up didn't want to stop, because if they did their engines would never get away again. There were "some" scenes on that Pass in these days, and very few drivers paid much attention to the glorious views of lake and mountain scenery that stretched all around them. Coming down into the plain again, the road then made a fairly straight and level run to Monastir, but here in wet weather the mud was the stickiest and deepest of all, and in dry the dust was most distressing.

To-day, of course, it is a splendid highway with reasonable gradients and wide, comfortable bends. But in the days of Kaymachalan, when this was the main road, and the side roads were merely tracks and bridle-paths among the hills, communication was an exceedingly difficult and arduous matter.

Another difficulty was that during his retreat the enemy had blown up an important railway bridge across a gorge near Eksisu, thus cutting our only railway. There was no material available for rebuilding, and after much delay a deviation was constructed. But in the meantime French and British motor-lorries had to do a spell of double tides on a particularly nasty stretch of road in the wet season. Skidding and ditching was the order of the day; nights out

were painfully frequent, hours were taken to move a convoy a mile or two, and it was a frequent occurrence to see long strings of hundreds of vehicles held up while one disobliging lorry was got out of difficulties. Motor-lorries, like mules, always seem to give most trouble in places where nothing else can pass.

Various attacks were made by the French, Russians, and Italians in the plains which stretch onward from Florina to Monastir, and on the heights to the west. But no real success attended these efforts. The Bulgars remained on their fortified frontier line, and in consequence the brunt of the fighting shifted once more to the Serbian Front, which was reinforced by what the French called their heavy light artillery.

The British forces, who all this time had been making things as uncomfortable as possible for the enemy by raids, stunts, patrol engagements and air bombing, did what they could to help. General Milne writes: "In order further to assist the progress of our Allies towards Monastir by maintaining such a continuous offensive as would ensure no transference of Bulgarian troops from the Struma front to the west, I now issued instructions for operations on a more extensive scale than those already reported. In accordance with these the General Officer Commanding on that front commenced opera-

tions by seizing villages on the left bank of the river with a view to enlarging the bridge-head opposite Orljak, whence he would be in a position to threaten a further movement either on Seres or on Demirhisar. The high ground on the right bank of the river enabled full use to be made of our superiority in artillery, which contributed greatly to the success of these operations. The river itself formed a potential danger, owing to the rapidity with which its waters rise after heavy rain in the mountains, but by night of the 29th–30th September sufficient bridges had been constructed by the Royal Engineers for the passage of all arms.

" During the night 29th–30th September, the attacking infantry crossed below Orljak bridge and formed up on the left bank. At dawn on the following morning the Gloucesters and the Cameron Highlanders advanced under cover of an artillery bombardment, and by 8 a.m. had seized the village of Karadzakoj Bala. Shortly after the occupation of the village the enemy opened a heavy and accurate artillery fire, but the remaining two battalions of the brigade, the Royal Scots and Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, though suffering severely from enfilade fire, pushed on against Karadzakoj Zir. By 5.30 p.m. that village also was occupied, in spite of the stubborn resistance of the enemy.

Attempts to bring forward hostile reinforcements were frustrated during the day by our artillery, but during the night the Bulgarians launched several strong counter-attacks, which were repulsed with heavy loss. During the following night determined counter-attacks of the enemy were again repulsed, and by the evening of the 2nd October the position had been fully consolidated. Preparations were at once made to extend the position by the capture of Jenikoj, an important village on the main Seres road. This operation was successfully carried out by an infantry brigade, composed of the Royal Munster and Royal Dublin Fusiliers, on the morning of the 3rd October, after bombardment by our artillery. By 7 a.m. the village was in our hands. During the day the enemy launched three heavy counter-attacks. The first two were stopped by artillery fire, which caused severe loss. At 4 p.m. the village, the ground in rear and the bridges were subjected to an unexpectedly heavy bombardment from several heavy batteries, which had hitherto not disclosed their positions. Following on the bombardment was the heaviest counter-attack of the day, six or seven battalions advancing from the direction of Homondos, Kalendra and Topalova with a view to enveloping our positions. This attack was carried forward with

great determination, and some detachments succeeded in entering the northern portion of Jenikoj, where hard fighting continued all night until fresh reinforcements succeeded in clearing out such enemy as survived. During the following day the consolidation of our new line was continued under artillery fire. On the 5th, after a bombardment, the village of Nevoljen was occupied, the Bulgarian garrison retiring on the approach of our infantry. By the following evening the front extended from Komarjan on the right via Jenikoj to Elisan on the left. On the 7th a strong reconnaissance by mounted troops located the enemy on the Demirhisar–Seres railway, with advanced posts, approximately, of the line of the Belica stream and a strong garrison in Barakli Dzuma. On the 8th October our troops had reached the line Agomah–Homondos–Elisan–Ormanli, with the mounted troops on the line Kispeki–Kalendra. The enemy's casualties during these few days were heavy, over one thousand five hundred corpses being counted in the immediate front of the captured localities. Three hundred and seventy-five prisoners and three machine-guns were taken."

But all this was only demonstration. The real work lay on the Serbian left. On the 4th October, after being more or less engaged on

every day in the meantime, the Serbian infantry began to cross to the left bank of the river. From that day onwards there followed a series of the most resolute and bloody conflicts in the Cerna loop, in a mountainous region sprinkled with high, steep crests and unexpected ravines. Day and night the Serbians struggled with their brave and hardy enemy, whose courage and endurance were almost as great as their own, and who had been reinforced by picked German troops from the Somme. Right across the Monastir plain, practically on the frontier line, the Bulgarian trenches ran to Kenali. The position, it was said, had been specially chosen by Mackensen himself, and it was undoubtedly cleverly fortified. Every slight eminence in that long flat line was taken advantage of, wire was plentiful, and the gun positions were skilfully concealed. One, we found later, had been constructed on the ruins of a church, cemented together and built up into a typically German-Western-Front position. The interesting thing about this particular spot, however, was not its elaborate maze of dug-outs and ammunition stores, but the fact that the French artillery in shelling it had plastered a series of shells from their hundred-and fifty-fives all round it, without having the luck to put it out of action. Ten yards difference in quite a dozen

instances would have given that gun a knock-out blow.

From Kenali the ground rose and the line followed the higher left bank of Saculevo river till it joined the Cerna close to Brod. East of Brod the Cerna enters a narrow valley between a typically Balkan tangle of mountains, and thus forms the famous Cerna loop.

The Russians were held up in the mountains between Lake Prespa and the Monastir plain on the Allied left. The French twice attacked the Kenali lines in the mud upon the plain, suffering considerable loss on October 14th. The position was too strong for a frontal attack unless backed up by more and much heavier artillery than was available, and the autumn rains were rapidly turning the whole region into a morass.

If Monastir was to be taken in 1916 it became only too clear that the Serbians must yet once more achieve the impossible. And taken the Serbians declared it must be! Those white minarets gleaming in the distance beckoned them on. Monastir was Serbian and covetous in Bulgarian eyes; Monastir was the next stage of the long road to Belgrade and the rescue of their beloved country from the tyranny of the Hun and his friends. Winter or no, hills or no, Monastir had got to fall.

The principal part of the fighting was done

by the First and Third Serbian Armies; the Second, in the Moglena region, in spite of many attempts, found it impossible to do much against such formidable positions as Dobropoli, Vetrenik, and Kukurus, and there they were obliged to be content with holding their own. But there was no stopping the Serbians in the Cerna loop. Supported by French artillery, throughout October they advanced inch by inch, fighting heavily for every gain. General Sarrail, seeing how things were going, withdrew some of the Russians and the 17th Colonial French Division and sent them to support the Serbians under the command of the Serbian Voivode Mishitch, perhaps the most brilliant of a race of brilliant soldiers. These troops held chiefly the western sector of the loop.

The fighting continued, always increasing in ferocity. The Bulgarians understood only too well that grim game of chess Field-Marshal Mishitch was playing among the Chuke heights. Every day the wounded came down from the hills, on mules with cunningly contrived chairs and stretchers, and in rough, springless supply and ammunition carts. But every day there was another hill gained. The Serbian Army was forging far ahead of its Allied left; Monastir was coming nearer and nearer—and so long as it fell what did the price matter?

In the meantime, while the Serbs were performing miracles on the Chuke heights in spite of the difficulty of getting up supplies and ammunition in winter, the Italians were snowbound among the mountains that stretched to Lake Prespa in the west, and the French were wallowing in mud on the Monastir plain. An assault on the Kenali line in mid-October in the presence of Sarrail and his staff having failed to achieve any result, on November 14th, after a heavy bombardment all along the enemy lines that began on the 13th and lasted twenty-four hours, General Sarrail ordered a general attack. The Italians did what they could in the snow, the Russians also joined in the fray, and the French themselves made a desperate effort, in pouring rain, to turn the formidable Kenali position, which the Serbian advance had now made into a salient. It was a brave effort and the moment chosen, a wet and misty November day after snow, was certainly one on which the enemy was hardly likely to expect an infantry attack. But the Franco-Russian troops got into difficulties with the mud, which in this region is of the stickiest and most objectionable kind, and were met with such heavy machine-gun and rifle fire that the attack failed. However, with admirable resolution, to everybody's astonishment, in spite of the mud and the wet

the assault was renewed during the afternoon, and trenches were taken at various points.

Strong counter-attacks were made during the night, with the troops on both sides fighting desperately in water and mud, and part of their trenches was taken back by the enemy. But their line had been pierced, and the pressure of those pertinacious Serbs on the Bulgar–German left was making their position daily more and more perilous. Quietly, in the early hours of November 15th, covered by a dense fog, they slipped out of their trenches. The Russians, advancing at dawn to attack Lajets, a village from which the day before they had been unable to dislodge the enemy, found the place evacuated. The whole of the Kenali lines, which had held up the French for so long, had been evacuated, and the Bulgars had retired five miles to their next position on the Bistrica river, some four miles south of Monastir.

The fall of the city was not, however, destined to be brought about by a frontal assault. The Bistrica line was thoroughly prepared, with deep well-sited trenches protected by much barbed wire. But heavy rains had turned the whole district into a dreary swamp that made extensive movement out of the question. Kenali had fallen, and the French had advanced, but only

once more to be held up. On their left the Italians were struggling bravely in the snow in an attempt to turn the position from that side. But the snow was too deep and the country too difficult. Further east the Russians, after gamely fording the Viro River breast high, could get no further. Once more it was only the Serbs who could do anything—and how they were able to do it Heaven above only knows.

Slowly but surely, with terrible persistence and unfailing skill, Field-Marshal Mishitch drove the enemy from position after position in spite of the most determined resistance. Every day some point of importance was taken. On November 14th the Serbs took the village of Tepavtsi ; on the 15th they reached the convent of Yaratok among the hills to the east of Monastir, and the Danube Division found itself confronting the enemy on the crest of the vitally important Hill 1212. The German general, placing himself personally at the head of his troops, led a most violent counter-attack on November 16th, which was pressed with such fury that they actually succeeded in retaking the village of Chegel. This news was telegraphed to Berlin. The General was promptly promoted by the impulsive Kaiser, and all Germany rejoiced and declared

that Monastir would never be taken—though by the time the news got into the German papers the city was already in our hands. For on the next day, the 17th, a change came over the scene. The Serb does not like being pushed back. There is quite as much bull-dog in him as in us. In a fight he prefers to hold on—or get a bit more. So, on November 17th, before the German general had got his breath back or learned of his promotion, the Danube Division, assisted by the Morava Division, retook hill 1212, this time for "keeps." After their reverse, after all this long spell of continuous fighting in wintry weather, up they went against bombs, and machine-gun and rifle fire, and heavy boulders rained down upon them. The Germans broke, the Bulgars fled—and the Serbians followed hard on their heels. As an indication of the severity of the fighting, it may be mentioned that the Morava Division sent six thousand troops to assist in the struggle for 1212, and they finished the fight with an effective strength of one thousand eight hundred.

There was no stopping them once 1212 was in their hands. Every man in the Serbian Army knew what that meant, and the fall of 1378, an equally important position just beyond, followed on the next day, November 18th. Those two heights settled the fate of Monastir.

Once more one saw that look of proud joy and satisfaction on the faces of the Serbs. The price didn't matter, though the price was awful. "Dobro! Dobro!" said the wounded, meaning that 1212 and 1378 were taken and the fall of Monastir must follow as a matter of course. Everybody up at the front was waiting for it in a gleeful, excited suspense. And, sure enough, on the night of the 18th there was the glow of a big fire in the sky and the noise of several big explosions. "Dobro, Dobro!" said the wounded, still coming down. The Bulgars were evacuating Monastir!

Next morning our expectations were realized. During the night of the 18th the Vardar Division reached Vaanovtsi and the Morava Division Orahovo, and at daybreak on the 19th the Danube Division took Makovo.

Monastir was now completely outflanked on the east, and its line of retreat, the road to Prilep, was seriously threatened. At half-past eight in the morning of the 19th November, a regiment of French cavalry, sent out to reconnoitre, discovered that it had been evacuated by the enemy during the night, and entered the city, followed by a column of French and Russian infantry just as the last of the enemy's guns limbered up and drove away.

The Serbs went on fighting among the hills.

Their only thought was, not to celebrate their victory but thoroughly to encompass the enemy's defeat. The French and the Russians pushed on and came into touch with his rear-guard in a strong position on a line of heights about five kilometres north of the city, extending from Snegovo to Hill 1050, to the south-west of Makovo. The Italians pushed forward on their front by Lake Prespa, and assisted by a French detachment, made a considerable advance all along the line. But the ground was very difficult; the French, Russian and Italian troops were very tired, and the enemy, who had begun to flee in disorder, suddenly found himself strengthened by the arrival of reinforcements sent to save Monastir—too late. His resistance hardened, and the Allies found themselves held up—with Monastir in their hands but well within the range of the enemy's guns.

The Serbs did not pause. Even after six weeks' fighting among the mountains in snow, frost, rain and mud, drained by casualties though they were, they were not satisfied with the mere taking of Macedonia's chief city. While the Drinska Division pushed hard farther east, and the Serbian Second Army "demonstrated," the Morava Division, assisted by the French 2nd Bis Regiment of Zouaves, ap-

proached to within two hundred yards of the enemy's trenches on the crest of Hill 1050, and the Vardar Division pursued the enemy to Paralovo. On the same day, the 20th, the 17th French Division advanced one and a half kilometres and took Dobromir. The counter-attacks on the Vardar Division which, on the 21st, followed this uncomfortable pressure on the enemy's left, were successfully beaten off. But the failure of the Allies to continue to advance on their left and centre, bad weather and the growing strength of the enemy, began to have their natural effect upon the exhausted Serbs on the Right. However, on the 26th November the Morava Division and the French 2nd Zouaves made themselves masters for the time of Hill 1050, after a bloody struggle, followed by several determined counter-attacks. Though there was no actual pause in the fighting, though every day one side or the other attacked or counter-attacked among that maze of cruel hills, now gaining or losing at the cost of much brave blood some slippery, rocky height that gave its possessors a momentary advantage, there to all intents and purposes the pursuit and the fighting that followed the taking of Monastir came to an end.

There can be no question of to whom the fall of Monastir was due. It was a Serbian victory,

as both the French and German *communiqués* admitted. By their indomitable onrush in the Cerna loop, by their tactical skill and their dogged scaling of one rocky height after another, by day and night, in rain and snow and mud, they, and they alone, had achieved the decisive success impossible to the Allied forces on their left. By sheer solid courage and long-sustained energy, under conditions and over ground that fill one with amazement and defy description, they had vanquished an enemy equally brave and determined. The fierceness of that struggle for Monastir has never been properly realized. In the Serbian sector one bloody battle succeeded another, fought out to the bitter end, on the enemy's side under German command, by picked German troops from the Somme, and the flower of the Bulgarian Army, inflamed by the most savage hatred. And out of this inferno of fury, in spite of the superiority of the enemy's numbers and positions, and with the weather fighting on his side, the Serbs emerged victorious both in brains and blood. The enemy was as outgeneralled as he was outfought, and Field-Marshal Mishitch and the First and Third Serbian Armies have every right to be proud of their success.

That it was largely a barren victory was no fault of theirs, and does not dim the lustre of

their wonderful achievements. Movement of large bodies of troops in the Balkans is a matter of the most appalling difficulty. General Sarrail had not enough troops at hand properly to exploit the Bulgarian retirement after the enemy had been reinforced, and such troops as were on the spot were too exhausted to do more than they did. After several supremely uncomfortable weeks in the mud and wet of the Monastir plain they were already at the limits of their endurance. War is not chess in spite of the popularity of the simile. Men vary as pawns do not, and these Frenchmen did not belong to the Balkans as did the Serbs. Their bravery was unquestionable; it was their heart and sinew that failed them. Naturally their "quality," as the soldiers have it, was not the very best; hard-pressed France could not afford to send her best troops away. They had not the *élan* of the Serbs; the Frenchman fights best on his native soil.

One wants to express this very carefully to make it quite clear that no charge is being brought, and, above all, that any suggestion of a lack of courage is absurd. France has been so fine in this War that such a thing is unthinkable. It was rather a lack of spur—the spur that urged on the Serbs, fighting for their country and the freedom and unity of the southern Slavs. The

only purpose of these observations is to meet the question that must naturally arise in every mind : if the Serbs could advance under more difficult conditions against greater numbers, why could not the French do more than they did ?

There is one other point which should not be overlooked. General Sarrail had a long and difficult line to guard, open at many vulnerable points to surprise attack. Already, taking into account the shortage of roads and railways and the nature of the country, he had crowded on to the Monastir front as many troops as it was possible to supply, and the turn events were taking in Greece and the dangers his long lines of communication were exposed to, were at this time once more causing him the gravest anxiety.

Taking all things into consideration, one is, therefore, forced to the conclusion that the failure to pursue the Bulgars to Prilep or far enough to place Monastir out of artillery range was disappointing but unavoidable. Once more the luck of the Serbs was out. As in the crushing defeats they had inflicted on the enemy in the early days of the War, as in their heroic resistance and their wonderful retreat, once more it was their lot after attaining the impossible to find it turn only to dust and ashes in their grasp.

Dust and ashes—that is all that Monastir was to them. Their advance stopped; reluctantly they settled down to an established front. The war of movement was over; and enemy guns in gradually increasing fury and Hunnish spite began a shameful destruction of the women and children and houses of Macedonia's "Queen of Cities."

Fighting went on till the end of the year. Whenever the weather permitted the enemy counter-attacked in a desperate effort to improve his position. The First and the Third Serbian Armies were each reinforced by a Russian Brigade, but a succession of bloody local combats on top of four months' hard fighting made it impossible for the fatigued Serbians to make any further advance. They had to be content with fortifying and consolidating the positions they had already gained. In the second half of December, the 17th French Colonial Division was withdrawn, leaving with the Serbian Armies only French artillery. Kruschevitza, Orle, Makovo and Hills 1378 and 1212 were then the most important points of their line, and as the wintry conditions made further fighting out of the question the Serbian authorities took the necessary steps to secure a well-deserved rest for their exhausted troops, and an opportunity to reorganize their sadly

depleted armies. So heavy had their losses been that it was necessary to disband the famous Volunteer Corps, whose heroic Commander, the " Wolf " had been killed, and one infantry regiment in each division to bring the other regiments to a workable strength.

Up to the end of 1916 the Serbian losses were : Officers killed and died, 271 ; wounded, 917 ; missing, 21—1209 in all. In men, killed and died, 6935 ; wounded, 22,723 ; missing, 1684—a total of 31,342. All told, for all ranks, the casualties amounted to 32,551. Their losses in material were trifling considering the severity of those five months' fighting : 11 guns, 2 machine-guns and 8 trench mortars, 6217 rifles, 18 ammunition limbers and 14 waggons.

The gains were : prisoners, 7171, among them 1179 Germans ; 97 guns, 87 machine-guns, 87 trench mortars, 14, 765 rifles, 112 ammunition limbers, and 83 waggons. Besides this, beyond all question, the enemy had had at least from two to three times more men put out of action.

# MACEDONIA

## THE WEATHER

PTE. SMITH EXPRESSES HIMSELF ON THE SUBJECT OF THE BALKAN CLIMATE

WHEN it's 'ot in Macedonia, it's 'ot and no mistake,
With that rotten kind of 'eat wot's 'ot and wet.
A skinny bloke gets " bony-er," a fat one is a lake,
And the middle size, 'e washes in 'is sweat!
It ain't a 'ealthy area—it's full of snakes and stinks,
And flies and fleas whose bumps is proper swells!
If you don't pick up malaria, watch careful where you drinks,
There's dysent'ry and typhoid in the wells!

When it's 'ot in Macedonia, it's 'ot.
(That is information gathered on the spot!)
It is 'umid, 'ot and 'orrid,
And you mops your dripping forehead,
And you *thinks* about the country quite a lot.
But all that you can say,
In a fretty, sweaty way,
Is " 'strewth, it's 'ot! "

When it's cold in Macedonia, it's cold without a doubt,
And you think of English winters as a treat.
You can easy get pneumonia afore you know you're out,
An' you seldom 'as a chance to dry your feet.

For days on end it's blowin' 'ard (you never know your luck),
An' then there comes a frost that makes you curse,
An' then it takes to snowin' 'ard (the tent ain't 'arf a muck !)
An' then it thaws—and that's a dam' sight worse !

When it's cold in Macedonia, it's cold !
(Don't you never dare to say you ain't been told !)
With a bitter, biting blizzard
Playin' round about your gizzard,
It's a picnic when the tent pegs will not 'old !
But all that you can say,
In a frozey, nozey way,
Is " 'strewth, it's cold ! "

When it's wet in Macedonia, it ain't exactly dry ;
Oh, strike me pink, it isn't half a Flood !
The roadways turn to rivers in the twinkling of an eye,
An' the camp is just a sea of slimy mud !
That Balkan mud is stickier than Mister Stickphast's glue—
You ought to see the soaking M.T. skid !
Oh, nothing could be trickier than getting lorries through,
But *as* we've got to do it, well, it's *did !*

When it's wet in Macedonia, it's wet.
(Make a note of that in case you should forget !)
For yourself you may feel sorry
When you're digging out your lorry,
But you won't find any words for it, I bet !
For all that you can say,
In a choky, soaky way,
Is, " 'strewth, it's wet ! "

## CHAPTER VII

### BOMBS

SPRING is a notoriously elusive season, and the springs we were waiting for were even more elusive. During the early months of 1917 nothing much happened at the front, and very little happened at home—if you can call a camp in a ploughed field home. The days of ransacking trenches immediately after evacuation, staring at dead, and collecting heaps of souvenirs were no more. There weren't even rumours to feed on.

We had some charming winter days and some particularly bitter frosty spring ones. Bright warm sunshine would be followed by ten degrees of frost ; a biting north-easter would give place to a western zephyr ; and that in turn would be succeeded by a heavy snow-storm or a deluge of rain. A meteorological chart for our particular bit of Macedonia—for the weather among the hills we discovered was curiously local—would have looked like a child's attempt at drawing a range of mountains.

Such a climate is very difficult to live in. It was bad enough in the autumn, when the range of temperature was almost unbelievable. Then at six in the morning the thermometer would register thirty-four or thereabouts ; at eight it would be sixty and at midday eighty odd in the shade, dropping to fifty-five at sunset and forty at bedtime. That was very trying ; but to find oneself one day in the depth of winter and the next in the middle of an English summer was even worse. Yet, since the weather was never bad for long, one could not call it a bad climate. We had more fine weather of one kind and another than one gets in England at this time of the year. Any verdict on the climate must be as inconclusive as the climate itself. Impartially considered, it ought to have been healthy, but it wasn't. Macedonia, indeed, is a spot where one never is quite well, if one is lucky, and can be very ill if one's luck is out.

During this period we worked as many cars as we could, adding our pitifully slight forces to those of the other Ford Companies working for the Second and Third Serbian Armies. They, too, were feeling the draught about springs, and great was the good-humoured rivalry between us all. Naturally every one swore by his own crowd. No other push had carried so many kilos, worked such vile roads, or conquered

such impossible passes as one's own. Really, of course, we had all done our best, but what were legs made for if not to be pulled ?

We got a great deal more sympathy from folks at home about the rigours of a Balkan winter than we were entitled to. But one rigour that we did suffer from was a particularly unpleasant snow-storm. After a whole night of it our vans went out at the usual time to see what was happening. It was still snowing—that powdery, drifting snow that falls when it is freezing hard. With great difficulty we reached the dump, managed one journey, and then found that further work was impossible.

All the vans were knocked off, and as the other companies were close to the dump they were soon back in their lines. But we were visitors, and to get back to our camp eight miles away we had to cross a mountain pass.

None who took part in it will ever forget that journey. It was bitterly cold; the wind cut through one, as the saying is, and the snow continued to fall and drift.

Henry jibbed, of course. We had no non-skid chains then—they came later. But had we had them they would not have made much difference. Even a Ford cannot be expected to climb a steep zigzag hill with half a ton of snow

compressed into a solid mass against its front axle.

But we had either to get back to camp or spend the night there with neither food nor fire. Standing at times up to our middle and occasionally having to haul each other out, we dug the snow away and pushed the vehicles up one by one, each later van following as much as possible the previous one's track. Cold, wet, and exhausted we ultimately reached camp, but the experience was well worth enduring. Up on the mountains among the drifts, chilled by the wind, blinded by the powdery snow and with all landmarks blotted out, one's frozen brain mused dully on Arctic exploration, life in the trenches, and school-book stories of St. Bernard dogs in the Alps. Fingers became so painful that one really could have cried like the poor little urchins one can see going to school in the London slums on a bitter wintry morning. Yet the queer thing was that in spite of our all having become so thoroughly chilled, in spite of soaking-wet feet and putties and trousers and greatcoats, not one of the men out in that storm developed so much as a cold in the head.

It was just as bad next day, but the heavy lorries of 688 Company made snow-ploughs and cut a way through after the road had been declared impassable. For this they got a

special and well-deserved order of praise from the General Commanding.

For a week or two it continued painfully cold in tents at night. One experienced the greatest difficulty in sleeping warm, and would wake up shivering, however cunningly one had rolled oneself in one's blankets. Then low temperatures became a thing of the past, and spring came gradually upon us. Daily we watched the snow melting on the mountains, and many and beautiful were the effects of the rising and setting sun and moon. But as everybody nowadays hates "scenery," the temptation to reel off a few pages of it is resolutely overcome.

The vans that were not working were overhauled and washed and polished till the men were sick of the job. Even the copper terminals of the ignition wires were burnished and the dents taken out of the mudguards. But still our springs did not arrive, though we did ultimately get a large quantity of spring steel which enabled us to turn out home-made springs for ourselves. We used to wonder if we were destined to stay there staring at the hills till the War was over, and another favourite speculation was what would happen to us in the event of a retreat. The Monastir Front was by no means secure, and Monastir itself was daily suffering a serious bombardment.

It was during this period that Mrs. Harley, a very good friend of ours, came to the Company to say good-bye. It had been our privilege to be of service to her unit on many occasions and we had conceived a great admiration for her. No woman ever worked harder or was keener on doing her bit, or thought less of her own comfort, or could beg more persistently for what she wanted for her job.

A slim, short-skirted figure, with wisps of grey hair floating in the wind, she stood in several inches of mud, proud and pleased because, her unit of ambulances having been dissolved, she had found a new task in feeding the starving women and children at Monastir.

"It ought to be useful and interesting," she said. "I'm so glad—I didn't want to go home till it was finished."

Other people might tell you she was Lord French's sister. She never did. And it is because she was so wonderfully strenuous, so eager to help and so ready to suffer any hardship so long as she could carry on, that one feels compelled to offer one's humble tribute of admiration to her name. Her death by a shell at Monastir is her family's private grief—but in Mrs. Harley the Scottish Women's Hospitals and the British Empire lost a woman who was an honour to her country and her sex.

Of course her death made no difference. The good work went on. Her daughter, who was her assistant, stuck to her job, and the Serbian Relief Women Drivers went in and out of the town every day in spite of the bombardment.

Mrs. Harley's death brings to mind another tragedy—the bombing of the hospitals at Verte Kop. The writer was there at the time for dental treatment.

It was a glorious sunny morning, and just before eight the sky began to hum with a fleet of Austrian aeroplanes—the famous bombing squadron. They came on in their usual wild-geese V-shaped formation and made straight for Verte Kop station, where they dropped bomb after bomb upon a big ammunition dump.

No aeroplanes went up to attack them from the big French Escadrille close by, and there were no anti-aircraft guns near enough to cause them any concern.

Having bombed the dump with obviously "good results," as the *communiqués* put it, they turned and came over the 36th and 37th General Hospitals, a couple of kilometres away : a huge collection of marquees and red crosses spread out beside the railway line. They knew the hospitals were there because they had bombed them before—and apologized—and later on they bombed them again.

Bomb after bomb was rained down upon the two hospitals. In the 36th several patients were wounded, and in the 37th two English nurses and four male orderlies were killed and nine others wounded.

One poor nurse met her death as she knelt by the bed of a wounded Serb whom she was endeavouring to lower to the floor. The patient escaped unhurt. Two of the orderlies were killed while lying down in the X-ray tent.

Then, having got rid of all their bombs, they went home rejoicing no doubt in their latest exhibition of frightfulness, while the hospital buried its dead and " carried on " as usual.

The British aviators in Salonica did not allow this outrage to pass unpunished. They bombed the enemy aerodrome in return four times in one day. Four times in one day they came and went. Imagine that day for the enemy ! The terror of it—the eyes glued to the sky, the nerves on the rack. A good day and a proper answer—all that could be done. They couldn't bring these brave, self-sacrificing women and non-combatants back, but, dear, grim devils, they could and they did give the fiends something to go on with !

But oh, the folly of it all, the utter unreason of everything connected with the stupidity called War ! Its glories are shams, its emotions

false. Our copybooks tell us that two wrongs don't make a right. And the old Adam in us out-Herods the crude and stupid Mosaic Law—murder for murder—and demands compound interest. Doesn't it show, doesn't everything show, little and big, that never, never, never must we allow the pestilence to stalk abroad again? And yet—shall we not forget? Will not some future generations, hypnotized by the heroisms of this Great War and inflamed by some National slight go mad again just like the world did in 1914? Can human nature change? Is progress ever real? Will civilization ever overcome its greatest curse—the crowd? The crowd, with the mind of the cave-dweller and the instinct of the savage, the crowd that is a prey to the politician, who in his turn is only the voice and the victim of his victims? That vicious circle, that lunatic gregariousness, that accursed nationalism with its craving for the top-rung—is it possible that the world is going to grow out of that as a result of the Great War? One can only hope. The price of the lesson will have been terrible and appalling. All this murder and misery just for that, which everybody knew! Oh, it's a mad, bad world, my masters, so let's get back to our muttons!

The burning of the dump was rather a fine

sight. All day there were fires and explosions. The H.E. went off altogether in a column of dense, black smoke, several hundred feet high. Up this ran theatrical, curling tongues of bright scarlet flame. Then came the explosion, and the black smoke and the red flame turned into a pillar of white and went soaring up, up, higher than Olympus, before it finally melted away. None of the other explosions were so imposing. Indeed, the constant pip-pip-pop of the small-arms ammunition for hours on end became quite monotonous and irritating. The whole dump was reduced to ashes, and a large quantity of various kinds of ammunition destroyed ; but as there was plenty in the country it made no difference to the preparations for the spring campaign.

This job had been done by a special fleet of fast 'planes, manned by picked men, the same crowd that had already carried out two very successful raids on Salonica. And they went on making our lives a burden, for there were at that time no planes on our front capable of coping with them.

The order was given in the French aerodromes that whenever news was received of their coming all machines were to go up, not to attack but to make themselves scarce. The idea was that it would not pay them to bomb

aerodromes if the machines were out of harm's way in the air. Unfortunately, most of the machines were Farmans, and for that country Farmans, as then built, were unsuitable. As a family bus in a flat country the Farman is no doubt quite good, but among mountains, in a district of gorges and rivers, bristling with air-pockets and unexpected currents, the Farman is best in its shed. Dozens of valuable lives had already been sacrificed, but the Farmans were still *en service.*

Then came one more raid. All the machines went up at the telephoned warning. As the Farman can fire only from the front and is slow and cumbersome to manœuvre, fighting was out of the question. A lively little Nieuport, with its genius for falling on its head and hurting only its propeller, had a try for a Boche, and returned safe, but disappointed. Fritz dropped bombs in passing on an Italian hospital, fortunately empty, and in a road by Saculevo Supply Dump, killing seven horses and three Bulgarian prisoners. Then, seeing the Farmans fleeing before him, he went home again.

But, alas, one of the Farmans got trapped in a pocket while returning, lost flying-way and fell on the outskirts of our camp! The pilot escaped with a broken thigh, a broken wrist, and two smashed ribs. But the poor observer,

seated in front, could only be placed on a stretcher to die.

While we were all sadly waiting for our friend to go West, the Crown Prince of Serbia drove up. He alighted and gazed in shocked sympathy at the dying man. Then he fumbled beneath his overcoat and took off his own order of Karageorgevitch.

"Pour la service," he said quietly, as he pinned it on the victim's breast.

Nothing could have been done more touchingly and delicately, and the pity of it was that the dying man was too far gone to realize the honour that had been bestowed upon him.

That accident was the last straw so far as that particular aviation squadron was concerned. They had lost so many comrades in this way that for a long time they refused to fly Farmans in that district any more.

## CHAPTER VIII

### NIGHT WORK

In the middle of March we moved to another camp. The Serbian Armies, woefully thinned by their pertinacious fighting, had once more been reorganized and given another part of the line to keep. We followed them and rejoiced that at last all our vehicles were able to get there under their own power.

At once it was borne in upon us that we had come to a very warm quarter.

Bombs were our trouble. Very few camp sites were available, and there was, in consequence, considerable overcrowding. This our old friend, the Austrian Special Bombing Squadron, was not slow to take advantage of. Daily they came over whenever the weather permitted. Their calling hours were any time from 5.30 a.m. till 1 p.m. with an occasional visit between tea and dinner thrown in. And knowing they couldn't miss hitting something they dropped bombs every time.

Two other Ford Companies, 707 and 709, were working with us, and their camp adjoined ours. One morning the M.T. had an especially bad time. Several vans of 707 M.T. Company were set on fire and altogether fifty-nine were placed out of action as the result of a particularly good shot. 709 M.T. Company had its officers' huts simply riddled with shrapnel and one tent set on fire, and our Company escaped with two bombs dropped just by the camp entrance. On another occasion we had a few pieces of shrapnel through the Company office. It was bombs to the right of us, bombs to the left of us, and bombs all round us day by day for a bit. Many and marvellous were our escapes. It was, indeed, very wonderful that none of our personnel ever qualified for a gold stripe during this period. The supply and ammunition dumps, of course, got their share of the good things going and paid rather a heavy toll in life. But very little military damage was done. A lesson had been learned from the burning-out of the Verte Kop dump, and all the ammunition was now spread out over large stretches of ground.

The French aircraft did not cause the enemy much trouble. One or two brave men sacrificed their lives for the honour of France, but it was the anti-aircraft guns that did most to make

the enemy uncomfortable. Those French gunners put in some really splendid work, sticking to their 75's with bombs dropping all round them—and, incidentally, drenching us with shrapnel and nose-caps. On one occasion, indeed, we were all so impressed with the courage and good shooting of the 23rd Section des Autos-canons de 75 that we sent them a letter of congratulation.

The road we were working was difficult and interesting. Our job was to carry supplies and ammunition up a mountain pass to Petalino. The road had been specially cut and blasted for the purpose by hundreds of Serbian soldiers and German and Bulgarian prisoners. A river ran through the gorge, the turbulent, unsavoury Cerna, and it always seemed to be running the wrong way. Instead of rising in these mountains it flowed through them, and the effect as we climbed above it was most curious. The river appeared to be running up-hill.

The scenery was wild and picturesque in the extreme—barren, rocky mountains, treeless, and with only a sprinkling of scrub here and there, waterfalls on each side of the road, great clefts in the hills, and always and all around the beautiful lighting effects and astonishing range of purples which make one forgive much in Macedonia.

We had another famine during this period. This time it was sparking plugs, but luckily supplies got through before it became serious.

The dust was beastly. It powdered our noses and lay thick on our clothes; it sneaked in under our goggles and made a stiff paste at the corners of our mouths.

We simply had to insist on having this pass to ourselves. When we began it was crowded with horse transport, and the blocks were worse than those that would happen at the Bank if there were no men in blue there to regulate the traffic. It was impossible to regulate it here. There was always a jam at the place where two vehicles could not pass, and the horse transport was always cutting into the wood across country and spoiling all our best-laid schemes. So we came to an arrangement by which we had the pass by day, and the horse transport had it to themselves at night.

As an illustration of how the M.T. live when they get the chance it may be recorded that we had a splendid camp here. The road that led to the Officers' Mess we turned into an avenue, marked out with fir branches stuck into the ground, which looked like growing trees and lasted a remarkably long time. The Scottish Women's Hospital had an advanced station close by, and on several occasions when their

lady ambulance drivers visited us we set them solemnly to work watering our "trees"! There was a sanded terrace, outlined in fragments of marble before the Mess, and a couple of garden seats. We had a lot of fun, making "a home beautiful" while waiting for the offensive to begin. But, lo, when all was done and we were bursting with pride and the other Ford Companies were green with envy, the usual bolt dropped out of the blue. All unexpectedly the O.C. returned from H.Q. one afternoon with the news that we were ordered to shift at once to a place only twenty odd kilometres away by crow-fly, but ninety-something miles by road!

We bore it. The language we used was our concern. We tried to make it worthy of the occasion. But we went. We had to. Jettisoning was the order of the day. Uprights, tin-roofing, precious ammunition boxes and all sorts of bulky treasures dishonestly come by had to be ruthlessly scrapped. But it grieved us more to be leaving the First Army than it did to uproot our beautiful camp and part with all the "extras" that had made existence comfortable. We had come to think, after nine months, that the First Army belonged to us, and that we belonged to the First Army. They were all our good friends. We were indebted to them

for a hundred kindnesses—and now we had to leave them at a moment's notice, without even time for a farewell.

It was a hot, long, dusty journey. Our road lay through the hills—it always did—but the hills were glorious in their new spring suits, and the surface of the road was a revelation of what resolute industry can accomplish in war time. Lake Ostrovo looked particularly beautiful as we passed by that old friend. This district, indeed, would be well worth touring if only there were places *en route* for a tourist to rest at.

At Verte Kop we left known ground for new. We found ourselves in a stretch of country better wooded and more fertile than we had seen for many a day. The new military road, though somewhat serpentine in places, had a positively wonderful surface for Macedonia; the hills were green; there were water and trees everywhere, and the whole country-side was sprinkled with well-cultivated maize-fields and mulberry orchards. A light railway ran by the side of the road, crossing and recrossing it again and again. The munition and supply dumps and the horse transport camps were all located in mulberry orchards, the trees of which served as most efficient screens from prying aeroplanes. There seemed something strangely

incongruous in using for such a purpose a place so associated in one's mind with rural peace as an orchard.

We reached our camp at 5.30, and, as we had risen at 4.30 that day and been on the go ever since, we were all very tired by the time we had got the camp into some sort of shape for the night.

We started work the very next morning, being hustled out to carry ammunition.

The road was flat—a great change for us. It ran through a sandy, rocky district, which appeared to be the bed of a dried-up lake. Orchards and running water were everywhere. We shook hands with ourselves. No hills, no aeroplanes—what could a Ford Company want more ?

The day was stormy, and after a shower or two the water came down from the mountains in a rush and washed out several sections of the road. But what was a little thing like that to us after our experiences in the past ?

We bumped through, and delivered the goods. The dump was at the foot of the hills, cunningly hidden among the trees. From there the shells were carried by pack-transport to the battery a kilometre away.

After dark we were called out again in two

convoys to carry urgently needed ammunition by roads unsafe by day.

All lights, of course, were forbidden. There was neither moon nor star to be seen. The heavens were black with clouds, and rain fell intermittently. On each side of the narrow road there was a ditch, and when it wasn't a ditch it was a ravine. There were also horse-transport and gun-limbers, as blind as we were, crawling along in the blackness, and as unable to hear and see us as we were to see or hear them. The noise of our engines on first speed deafened us, and they on their springless vehicles were deafened by their own creaks and rumbles. There was pack-transport, too, which danced skittishly all over the place.

It was an experience oft repeated but seldom enjoyed. Ditching, of course, was frequent, and usually necessitated unloading and bodily lifting Henry back to the path of righteousness again. Collisions also were plentiful, both with friend drawing-up ahead unseen, and foe coming on one unexpectedly in the dark. Everything else on the road is "foe" on such occasions. Radiators suffered badly. And so did the poor horse-transport; their plight was quite as bad as ours. At one particularly gloomy spot a waggon, two horses, and driver went pell-mell over the side into a ravine. We thought they

were all done for, but they weren't. Not even the waggon went West.

Possibly it can be imagined what sort of progress is made in such conditions. As we approached the battery we were helped considerably by the enemy's night-lights. The gentle Bulgar had a great fondness for star-shells on dark nights, even when there was nothing doing, and the distance at which in such circumstances they will afford a glimpse of the road is really astonishing.

One of the batteries to which we carried ammunition by night at that period had a very special interest for us. It was British, and consisted of two 4.7 naval guns with a history. They were, according to Captain Edlestone, its commander—upon whose head be the responsibility for the story—the original guns landed by Sir Percy Scott in South Africa, and used in the defences of Ladysmith. Having, as all the world knows, done real good work there, in this War they were placed on the *Carmania*—auxiliary-cruiser—where, after a very sporting fight, they sank the *Cap Trafalgar*. The *Carmania* was later turned into a transport, and these guns were placed in the Salonica defences. At a time when rumour had it that Mackensen himself proposed to pay special attention to this front, in response to requests

for more guns they were hurried up-country and handed over to the Serbian Army. Manned by British Tommies, under the command of Captain Edlestone and Lieutenants Whitelaw and Bakes, they put in a lot of excellent shooting. The Serbs thought a very great deal of them—because they were British. Day by day they pounded away, and were pounded at in return. Naturally their long, eventful life had "taken it out of them," but they went merrily on, seven hundred yards short of their proper range, and having practically turned themselves into howitzers. Ultimately their position was so heavily shelled that they had to move, and they went to a new position, with new tubes, and began a fresh lease of life.

Busy times for us did not last long. Quite soon we again found ourselves up against the most trying aspect of modern warfare—the waiting in between. For various reasons, mostly French, our spring offensive failed, and once more we were kicking our heels in idleness. Another Ford Company, just out from England, came up from the Base to assist us to do nothing. It was very hot and very dull. We did not know there was such a boredom in the world as the boredom that settled down upon us. Salonica was a forbidden city and joy-riding was officially tabooed.

Taboos, of course, have a way of getting broken, and an incident connected with an indefensible joy-ride is possibly worth recording.

Two joy-riders were returning about one in the morning, when the car by a swerve just managed to avoid something lying in the road. A few minutes earlier we had passed another car travelling in the opposite direction—on official business it is to be hoped.

"What was that?" asked the driver.

"A man," replied the passenger. "The other car must have knocked him down and gone on!"

"I only just missed him," said the driver.

"Looked dead—dead as a doornail," said the passenger.

Our eyes met. We pulled up and sat there regarding each other for a second or two.

The situation was a delicate one.

"Oh, hang it, we must go back and see," said the passenger.

"If he's dead we can shove him to the side of the road, out of the way!" said the man at the wheel.

"If he isn't——" said the passenger.

"It's up to you," said the driver. "You're the senior—you'll be blamed! We'll go on if you like!"

"No—we *must* see!" said the other.

So we started to walk back. What the passenger felt was that he simply couldn't leave the poor wretch's fate uncertain, in case anything could be done for him. But the trouble was that if we did have to take him to a hospital and report the manner of his finding, how were we to explain our presence on the road?

As we approached we saw that he was lying on his back in the very middle of the road. Both arms were thrown out, and he lay dreadfully still.

"It's all right! He's dead. We'll just lift him on to the grass out of the way and say nothing about it," we decided as we drew near.

Thrilling with horror, we flashed our electric torch upon him, and tragedy changed to irritating farce.

He was a Frenchman—dead-drunk. That was the spot he had chosen for sleeping it off—and anybody who looked more dead it would be impossible to imagine.

In a couple of minutes we had him kicked and prodded into wakefulness and incomprehension. Another two minutes of "Allez-ing" sufficed to get him on to staggering feet, out of the roadway. But he wouldn't lie down where we

wanted him to. He reeled across to the other side and tumbled into a deep, dry ditch. There we left him with a laugh of relief, knowing that no drunken man could ever get out of that till sober enough to take care of himself.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE NATIVES

" It's a rum sort of a 'ole, ain't it, sir ? " one of our men summed up Macedonia one day.

A native, dressed in a long, white smock and baggy, white breeches, with a red sash round his waist leapt nimbly across a ditch to leave our car plenty of room.

" Allus look like women in the distance, don't they, sir ? " commented the driver. " Makes you feel quite disappointed-like when you comes up to 'em."

He buzzed his horn at a couple of very Biblical donkeys, half-hidden by their loads of brush-wood, and as usual straggling all over the shop. They were in charge of a woman, barefooted and ungainly, dressed in gaudy rags and with her face plastered thickly with dust.

" I never did see sich rag-bags as the women is out here," he went on. " I often wonder what my missus'd say if she could see the old man a-riding on 'is donkey while 'is old girl foot-slogs it in the dust ! "

BALKAN "BEAUTIES"

SNOW-CROWNED KAYMACHALAN

Presently we passed a mixed flock of sheep and goats, browsing on scorched, coarse grass and attended by a bearded shepherd who might have stepped out of an illustrated Bible—a very old and dirty illustrated Bible. The stones scattered about were curiously like the local bread, crust and crumb. Inevitably one thought of the Bible again, and its local colour took on a new meaning. It was very hot, and the dull note of the hand-wrought copper sheep-bells was very pleasant to the ear. In the distance the tall, white minaret of a mosque and the squat tower of a Greek Orthodox Church showed up vividly white in the sun. A few miles away on the hill-tops a trench-mortar rumbled noisily.

" If I was to write 'ome and tell the missus they *milks* their sheep, she'd think I was pulling her leg," remarked the driver. " In 'er last she arst me who I was getting at 'cos I'd wrote and said the Serbos called eggs ' yah-yah.' But it ain't bad, is it, sir, either to drink or the cheese they makes from it ? " he wound up a little disconnectedly.

Absorbed in unburdening himself, he was not paying proper attention to his job. At intervals along nearly all the Balkan roads there are channels to carry storm-water away or to allow water for irrigating purposes to flow across.

These the authorities, confronted with the difficulties of a polyglot campaign, have marked with a quaint, illustrated sign. This is certainly less mirth-provoking than an attempt at Salonica, where there still exists a large notice, in three languages, to motor-car drivers, the English portion of which is : " STOKERS ATTENTION ! " But to get back to the point, the driver missed one of these pictorial warnings. Instead of slowing up he took the dip at speed. The result was a bump which was as bad for the springs as it was for the passenger's temper.

" Sorry, sir, I wasn't looking, thinking about what a rum 'ole it is," he apologized.

He was right enough. Macedonia is a rum hole from our point of view—the other fellow's hole always is.

As everybody knows, it has had a very chequered career. For ages it has been a thorn in the flesh of the goddess of European Peace. Murder and malaria have been its national epidemics. Public and private bloodshed and robbery have been until recently commonplaces of its daily life. Political chicanery and national aspirations have made it a bone of contention between all the middle-Europe pack.

Goodness only knows who is really right or how far the present parcelling-out of this much-

disputed region will be altered by the Peace Conference. At present nobody is satisfied—and the difficulty in this world is that the other side has always got its own case. That is what makes life so hard for the Bernard Shaws and so comfortable for the fools and the bigots. Each nation concerned can supply a shoal of facts to prove its own claims and a sheaf of evidence proving the other side's iniquity. One of the curiosities of the psychology of peoples is the different, passionate conclusions at which they arrive from the same premises. The War, of course, is the tritest and most obvious illustration. All the time the millions on both sides have honestly believed in themselves. From the same facts they have drawn opposing conclusions, and shuddered at their opponents' "lies," and smiled pityingly upon the enemy's foolish belief in ultimate victory. This is something outside politics—a phase of nationalism, and individual life also, that belongs to the frailties of human nature. Both German and English—but somebody will be calling me pro-German in a minute, which I am not. I believe in the righteousness of our cause and the wickedness of our enemies and I deplore their wrongheadedness when they can't see it themselves—seven hours out of the Trade Union eight. But sometimes during that eighth hour

when the moment for downing tools seems so long a-coming I wonder—well, never mind. All I started out to say was that I have neither the information nor the inclination to offer any solution of such a complicated question as the Balkan problem. And so far as Macedonia is concerned all I intend to do is to jot down casual impressions gleaned during our too long sojourn in various parts of it.

In other words, like the driver, I propose to consider it solely as a rum hole.

Curious customs are not far to seek. Oil and water, of course, cannot mix, but Jews, Bulgars, Greeks, Serbs, and Turks, to say nothing of several smaller tribes, cannot live cheek by jowl without influencing each other. Two instances of this soon strike the most superficial observer.

In all the villages practically every household keeps a pet lamb. One sees it running in and out of the mud-floored living-rooms. The children play with it and when it has strayed too far the householder carries it back in his arms—not so much out of kindness as because it is a difficult matter to drive one mutton. To pick it up saves bother.

Naturally one wonders if there is any religious significance attached to this habit, and—remembering the Jews—if this is the one point at which all the religions of the Near East meet.

But the only people it has any religious significance for are the Turks. They bring up a pet lamb to be sacrificed at the feast of Bairam, and the rest of Macedonia has apparently said to itself: "That's a jolly good idea. Let's all keep a pet lamb." So they do, and that is all there is to it.

Even more curious is the habit among the male Greeks of fiddling with a string of beads. This belongs to the town more than the country. One of the first things one notices in Salonica, Monastir, Florina, Vodena, or any other Macedonian town, is the number of men who carry a string of common children's beads with which they toy while they walk or talk. They swing them round like Catherine-wheels; they twist them on their fingers, jerk them to and fro, and throw them up and then pull them back and crumple them inside their hands.

Many Englishmen find it most irritating; others think of the devout Catholic telling his beads and are a little shocked. But it is simply another habit copied from the Turks.

As everybody knows, the Moslem rosary has ninety-nine beads representing the ninety-nine names of God. These the pious Arab still repeats, squatting on his haunches. The Macedonian Moslem, however, seldom possesses a rosary nowadays. He has given the habit up,

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but not before he has made beads fashionable for the imitative Christian. The townsman now carries a small string of them and frivols with it—to keep himself from smoking too many cigarettes !

The terrible Turk is far and away the most interesting figure in Macedonia to our eyes. Here, at any rate, the leopard seems to have changed his spots, or else he really is the Serb converted to Islam, which the Serbians claim him to be. He is picturesque and peaceable, he works hard in his fields, and in a large number of cases speaks " Macedonski," which the Serbs call Serbian and the Bulgars Bulgarian, and knows no Turkish, and very little Greek.

His women still go covered, poor things. In the humid heat they must suffer terribly, though possibly they get some compensating protection from the dust. His ramshackle mud and stone-built dwelling, with its typical, ancient rickety gateway, is as inviolate as ever. None but uncles, brothers, and such close relations may behold his womenfolk unveiled. They scuttle like rabbits from Tommy and the Serbos, as Tommy calls them, and all the natives religiously pick up a stone—the ever-handy " knocker " of the Near East—and hammer on the door-posts to give warning of their approach.

The uglier and the older the woman, the more careful she is about her veil. But pray do not think that that means the young and pretty one is careless. Far from it; the older dames merely make more fuss. "Moons of Delight" are very few and far between—or very well hidden. "Moons of Delight" don't drive donkeys in the dust, or labour with their lords and masters in the field. In almost every case the harem consists of only one wife, though here and there we heard of "rich" Turks with two.

The children were numerous and pretty everywhere. The little boys in their fez and the little girls in their quaint, bright-coloured trousers were always a delight to our eyes and willing consumers of toffee and chocolate. But, alas, most of them had yellow "malaria-faces" and protuberant tummies, telling of enlarged malarial spleens! One often saw the poor mites lying about listless and feverish. Their fathers appeared to be very fond of them. Education was not neglected. In every village of any size there was a school, of a sort, with a teacher to match, where boys and girls are instructed together. During the hot weather the class was held under the long verandah in front, and a group of Turkish children clad in many-hued garments droning the Turkish

equivalent of "C A T cat" was a sight worth going many miles to see.

Altogether our impression of the Moslems in Macedonia was that they were "not half bad." Man and woman, in spite of the Turks' world-wide reputation for laziness, they led fairly industrious lives; though, no doubt, their donkeys worked hardest of all. They were cleaner on the whole than the other Macedonians, and from one thing and another, including the fact that one often saw a Turkish woman riding the ubiquitous donkey while her lord and master walked, we came to the conclusion that they treated their womenfolk better, in spite of the veils. But how their villages did smell!

They were far less extortionate for grapes, tomatoes, and melons than the Greeks, and though technically enemies they seldom appeared to bear us any ill-will. Possibly this may have been Turkish cunning, but they were certainly ready to go out of their way at all times to assist us.

To be a Turkish priest in Macedonia seems to be even less profitable than to be a curate of the Church of England, though it is a very popular job. The recognized rate of pay in the villages was thirty-five kilos of maize from each house per year if there were children, and half that

amount if there were no children—a policy the reverse of that of Mr. Lloyd George. As there are two or three priests in each village they are obliged to eke out a living by farming for themselves. Fees did not produce much. Competition, no doubt, kept the prices down. A "rich" villager, we were informed, paid four francs for a marriage, but the usual rate was two francs, and very poor men were married for nothing. For a funeral the family would give a sum according to their means, say fifty francs in the case of a "rich" man, for the benefit of the deceased's soul. This was divided equally among all the guests, and the priest only got his share with the rest! It was up to the guests to pocket their share or to give it to the poor as they pleased. The tombstones were rough slabs of granite, usually of different shapes for men and women, the top of that of the former being crudely carved to represent a fez. The mosques were commonly very bare and poorly decorated, and judging from one or two furtive peeps inside the evening call to prayer did not produce much response. In the fields, however, one often saw them cease work and pray with their backs to the sun—a truly thrilling "Eastern" sight to European eyes. It was nearly always possible, by the way, for any officer to enter any mosque for a considera-

tion, and a polite offer to remove one's footgear was always negatived.

In the towns, of course, things were different. The priests were better paid, the schools more up-to-date, the mosques more elaborate with tapestry and praying-carpets, and the tombstones of the rich were often neatly carved and gaudily gilded.

Particulars of one of their fasts made a great impression upon our ignorant minds. It appears that all who wish to enter Paradise must fast once a year for thirty days. But, as our men put it, "it ain't 'arf a fast!" From dawn to dusk neither bite nor sup may pass their lips. They are not even allowed a drink of water—with the temperature at anything from 90° to 100° in the shade! During this period they certainly put in much more sleep than usual during the daytime—and so should I!

In the ordinary way the life of the district is the peaceable agricultural life portrayed in the Scriptures. Turks and Macedonians alike drive out their flocks of sheep and goats and their herds of swine or cattle in the early morning. Most of the women remain at home, adding cloth-weaving and clothes-making to the customary household duties. Some toil in the fields with the men. Oxen, of course, do the

pulling. They plough and hoe and thresh, and the farming implements appear to be of exactly the same pattern as in Biblical days. So, too, is the chief means of transport, after the donkeys, the ox-cart. These springless, creaking, clumsy vehicles, with their quaint, spiked sides, drawn by either oxen or water-buffaloes were always a source of much argument among us. Did they represent the survival of the fittest and cheapest means of moving heavy loads in a country where there were practically no roads as we know them, a country of muddy tracks and shallow streams; or were they proofs of a native lack of any instinct of progress or adaptability? We never settled it—but they got in our way a great deal.

During the heat of the day practically everybody slept, the field-workers casting themselves face downwards under the shade of a convenient tree. Very little shade seemed to content them, though dotted about the country there were great, solitary trees, whose obviously sole purpose was to give shade to sheep and men. The curious thing about many of these trees was their hollow trunks. We saw dozens with openings six to eight feet wide and four to six feet deep, with absolutely no fronts at all. It was astonishing that with such a weakness so huge a trunk with so many big, spreading

macadam, streams have been bridged, sand tracks robbed of their terrors, holes filled, and gradients made possible. It used to be our outstanding joke that the Greeks were doing very well out of the War whether they came in or not. Besides squeezing us for more money than they had ever dreamed of, we were also making them a present of better roads than they had ever seen. The worst of it was that the climate and the country were all against the road-makers. The scorching sun dried their binding material into loose powder, and the torrential rains washed it away. This meant that the work could never really cease in any sector—a large number of natives must always be kept employed on repairs and renewals. And all the time, of course, fresh roads were becoming necessary in other places.

One wonders what will happen afterwards. Macedonia will find herself confronted with a smaller edition of the problem so many people still fear in the West. Her women, as downtrodden and despised as any in the world, have been earning money for themselves—yea even as much as half a crown a day, in a country where before the War most of the trading was "in kind," a chicken was fivepence and eggs were four a penny. Will there be a revolt? Will there begin a movement for Emancipation

and Votes for Women that will end in their lord and master being kicked off the donkey ?

Some of the Turkish open-air markets were very interesting. Delightful, dirty, picturesque old rogues, with seamy faces and grimy, gaudy garments, and handsome, well-set-up young men streamed to the spot from all the villages around. The only women present were Greeks. The hucksters squatted on the grass with their wares spread out in front of them. It was a source of much amusement to us to see the way they hauled their right foot in and tucked it away when it displayed a disposition to wander among their goods.

The chief articles on offer were paprika, a sort of peppery plant much used in Balkan cookery, maize, olives, soap—very crude—figs, and dried grapes ; and fresh grapes, tomatoes, melons, and tasteless turnipy apples in season. There were also hand-forged donkey-shoes, reaping and bill-hooks ; hand-beaten copper vessels of very inferior workmanship ; and tin wares made from the paraffin and petrol cans so popular in the Balkans. The drapers had a rough bivouac to protect their goods from the sun. These mainly consisted of highly-coloured handkerchiefs, prints, and cloths, mostly Austrian. The butcher erected a crude gallows on which he hung his skinny joints—we never

saw any native meat that could possibly be called fat—where they could be, and were, fingered by any grimy paw that came along. The same paw might pass on to a Billygoat for sale or hire for stock purposes, prod his points, handle a sample of sultanas, and finally dip itself into a jug of soft cheese for a taster. These things, however, jarred only on our finical Western minds.

The lively, coloured, chaffering crowd, with a troop of braying donkeys tethered in the background, the mountains in the distance, the white, winding, sandy tracks across the brown and barren plain, and over all the burning sun and the blue, cloudless sky made a picturesque and unforgettable picture. In years to come it will bring a sudden yearning look into the eyes of the vanman you are "strafing" because he is delivering the groceries or the bread or the washing a couple of hours late. While he explains that his motor "broke down, m'm," or he has "'ad a couple of punctures at the end of the road, miss," his memory will hark back to a smelly, Turkish crowd and his soul will cry out for——. But what right has a vanman to have a *Wanderlust?* Tell him you will deal somewhere else if he puts you out like that again!

This, however, is to anticipate a little. He is

not back at his old job yet, worse luck, and God bless him! He is still in the Balkans wondering, without being able to say so, what the devil he is doing in that galley, and staring with friendly, scornful British eyes at all sorts of "rummy sights," while he dreams of early demobilization.

In the meantime he has coined a new word, as the British Army seems to do wherever it goes. As usual it has been added for all time to the soldier's vocabulary, and as usual it is enough to make a philologist tear his hair. In that sense it is first cousin to "napoo." All over Macedonia children and beggars asking for alms use the Turkish word "baksheesh"—something for nothing. Tommy has got hold of that and twisted it into "buckshee." Now anything he owns that he ought not to own is referred to as "buckshee." Anything he gives away is presented with the explanation "buckshee." Anything scrounged or pinched becomes "buckshee" as soon as it has entered into his possession. All extra "issues" are "buckshee"—everything is "buckshee"; he has fallen in love with the word and works it very hard. Language difficulties never daunt a British Tommy, not even modern Greek or Macedonski. With "buckshee," "oxo"—Army Greek for "sling your hook"—"idey

Johnny," which means "buck-up," and "combeeong"—French—the Army linguist is prepared to tour Macedonia. Should any difficulty arise not to be met by that vocabulary, he firmly believes he can always make himself understood by using broken English—and the amazing thing is that he is generally right!

The villagers like him. It is the same old story. He has won their hearts, simply by being himself wherever he goes in his innocent, insular way. Macedonia is an unfriendly land. A country whose chief recreations are murder and malaria is bound to be. Strangers are eyed askance. Either they are not rich enough for it to be worth your while to cut their throat or they have come to spy out the land and see if it is worth while to bring their friends to cut yours. The tales of the Comitadji are not exaggerated. Until we occupied it, a rich Englishman, and a large landowner, never dared to visit his property at Langaza oftener than twice a year, and then only when accompanied by an armed escort. Village preyed on village, with wandering bands from afar chipping-in as the fancy took them. That is why most of the villages are so squalid, and much of the land cultivated in such a half-hearted manner. Always one finds the naturally fortified villages, particularly those in the

hills, more prosperous and settled-looking. In the defenceless plains they are a mere collection of hovels, inhabited by a dirty, sullen people, afraid to display any signs of prosperity, afraid even to work more than is required for their bare subsistence, lest others should swoop down upon them and reap what they have sown. There lies the real tragedy of Macedonia, though it is true that it is something which we have temporarily changed. The Comitadji have disappeared, made themselves scarce in the sight of our army. The gentleman who in 1914 was a brigand by profession now shovels stones on to one of our roads, assisted by his wife and family, or cringes to Thomas Atkins for a tin of jam !

In the beginning nearly all the villagers were decidedly hostile. But Tommy went in and conquered them, though, as a matter of fact, he was forbidden to ; and as soon as they got used to him they liked him—and put up their prices sky-high. But it is impossible to like them much. They are so unclean, uncouth, ignorant, and animal-like, and they live in such miserable hovels amid such appalling smells.

The only trouble between our men and the villagers was over animals. Everywhere the place was infested with half-wild dogs—nasty, savage brutes to strangers, but tractable enough

to their owners and their owners' children. They used to attack our men and make raids on our meat dumps and cook-houses. The death penalty was exacted wherever possible, and the compensation demanded would have brought a blush of envy to the cheeks of a fair owner of a First Class at Cruft's Show. It was never paid, however.

The other difficulty about animals concerned donkeys. Tommy didn't like to see a woman trudging in the dust behind her lord and master, who was perched on a donkey already sorely overladen. He used to pull the big, fat, lazy brute off, and that gave rise to misunderstandings. But the thing that really "got his goat," as he expresses it, was to see a fiend jabbing at a sore place on the animal, carefully kept open for that purpose, or else brutally beating it with a thick stick. In such circumstances even a military policeman has been known to assault the astounded wayfarer, who never could understand what all the fuss was about. Donkeys, it may be observed, which in those days could be bought for from five to ten shillings, now cost from ten to fifteen pounds.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SIMPLE LIFE

So far as scenery is concerned, Macedonia is a very big pie with not very many plums in it, though when one does find a plum it is usually a fine one.

The view of Salonica from the hills, for instance, is particularly fascinating. In the distance, from the hinterland, Salonica is as pleasing to look at as from the sea. The views of Vodena, too—white houses with red roofs, nestling among wooded hills and waterfalls; of luxuriant Naoussa, with palms and terraces and more waterfalls; and the wonderful scenery of the Gornichevo and Petalino Passes linger affectionately in the memory.

But what lying things views are! The first impression of nearly all Macedonian towns seen from afar is of cities quaint, Eastern, gay and clean. But, once distance has ceased to lend enchantment to the view, what a rude awakening follows!

Another fine panorama, full of colour, is

from Hortiac, down to the two lakes below and on to the blue mist of the hills beyond. From Derbend, too, across the plain to the next range, with "Gibraltar" gaunt and mysterious to the left, and the Seres road stretching on as far as the eye can follow, there is a view with a certain uncanny charm of its own, quite apart from its military interest.

As in most hilly countries, the most beautiful hour of the day is the hour before sunset, when the folds of the hills and the ravines stand out, and the countryside is a glory of purples and blues.

Macedonia is not, however, a land of great visibility from the panoramic point of view. Always, even in the cloudless scorching summer, there is mist in the distance. One can see much farther on a clear day in England, which is eloquent evidence of the fact that the heat in Macedonia is of the intense damp variety—the hardest of all to bear.

Even about these views, beautiful though they are, there is something unsatisfying. It is not the ruggedness—Macedonia is not all rugged. Nor is it the extraordinary number of ravines and fissures; nor the lack of trees, for even where the country is well wooded one feels it just the same. Nor is it the lack of life, for almost everywhere, in the oddest of places, one

sees goats and sheep feeding. Nor is it lack of colour, for there is always colour on the hills, and at certain times of the year the wild flowers are gorgeous, and what are weeds in England grow in the heat into things of unexpected beauty. Nor is it the lack of habitations, for, seen from a distance, the mud-and-thatch or red-roofed villages peppered about the plains and the hill-sides are picturesque enough. Yet there is something missing. Whatever the scenery, wherever one looks, Macedonia always seems unhomely.

All the same, most of our people were convinced that it was a country capable of great development, but with that opinion I do not agree. It can and probably will be developed in parts ; but taken as a whole it struck me as a country where its inhabitants found it as difficult to make a living as it was to keep alive. Doctors are few, but death and sickness are everywhere. Enlarged spleens, yellow faces and shaky hands tell their own tale. Dysentery is dreadfully common to childhood and all ages, typhoid is by no means unknown, and phthisis and pneumonia have a terrible roll of victims to their credit. The soil itself is not good except in patches. There is too much sand and too many ranges of barren, rocky hills, though it is true some of the hills are very well wooded,

and there are several good, if rather inaccessible forest districts.

The whole country, indeed, is a series of mountains and plains, which make intercommunication difficult and mean too much water in winter. The barren areas are immense. Shallow wide-spreading rivers, often dried up in summer, are everywhere, and lakes of all sizes are plentiful. But the grazing is bad—as witness the lean condition of what little meat is eaten. Mineral wealth appears to be mainly of the company-prospectus variety. There is no coal worth mentioning, though, judging from various specimens we saw and tried to burn, there will be plenty—about twenty thousand years hence.

What can be done with a country like that? It is easy, of course, to talk about development when one wanders through a poverty-stricken, sun-scorched wilderness, where machinery is practically unknown and the methods are all out of date. But when one comes down to hard facts and practical measures and paying propositions, well, it is best to let somebody else with money to burn take the developing in hand!

A little has been done. At a few favourable places factories with modern machinery have been erected and are paying well. And in the

Naoussa district a timber company under English management has shown what industry and energy can accomplish, getting their timber down from the mountains by means of a cable railway which cost them twelve thousand pounds. But these are only drops in the ocean.

The staple industry, of course, is agriculture. Everybody grows maize, and the crops are generally good and vineries are everywhere. Tobacco is cultivated with great success, and tomatoes, melons and gourds are plentiful. Figs are disappointing, apples are poor, plums coarse, and potatoes infrequently met with. Beans are a big crop and there is a queer sort of spinach much in favour. A fair amount of wheat, oats and barley is grown; opium and millet are largely cultivated, and in some places there are rice-fields, and a little cotton.

Most of the orchards are mulberry orchards, cultivated for the silk-worm industry, which is very extensive. The caterpillars are kept dry and warm on benches in sheds, which are really part of the one-story thatched houses. There, clinging to leaves and twigs by the thousand, they spin their cocoons and are fed on young mulberry leaves. It is curious and rather revolting to stand in one of those semi-dark sheds and look at those thousands of fat white

bodies, all so busy, and making, as they feed and spin, a noise like the pattering of a light shower of rain on the leaves of a tree.

In one instance a delightfully dignified old Macedonian showed us round. He and his wife and his son and his son's wife and their first child all lived in the similar shed next door, the two making up their "house." The child was a sweet little imp of about five, playing with a live baby-bird. There was a piece of string round one of its legs, and whenever it escaped from his hot, grubby hands he hauled it back with a gurgle of delight. He had an angel's face.

We visited them again later, when the cocoons had all been spun. The twigs were brought out on to the long, low verandah, and everybody was very busy plucking off the tiny yellow egg-like cocoons and spreading them out to dry. After that they are steeped in hot water and the silk unwound into hanks, in which state it is sold. Our host informed us that his yield had been twenty-five pounds, and politely expressed the opinion that we had brought him good luck.

His house may be taken as a fair specimen of most of the village houses. Of course in Macedonia the poverty-stricken appearance of some of the houses and their inhabitants is due to the

fact that in the days of Turkish rule nobody dared to make much show of wealth for fear of extra exactions. But this is not true of the peasantry, and all the houses we saw were practically the same.

His house was nothing more than a roughly built big shed divided into two. Withies were laced in and out of the uprights and plastered on both sides with a mixture of mud and lime and short straw. The roof is either tiled or thatched—in this case it was thatched.

Everybody lived in this one room with its earth floor. Furniture there was none. Clothes were not even hung up in this home, though they were in others. They lay in stacks round the walls. There were no beds. Filthy rugs and coloured quilts were spread on the floor at night. There was an open fireplace of the crudest and smokiest variety. On the verandah, where meals were mostly eaten, there were two or three very dirty cushions and two small, rough tables a few inches high. The cooking was as primitive as everything else. The maize bread, the principal article of diet, was baked in a round copper pan, which was buried, lid and all, in hot wood ashes. Whenever there was any meat to be roasted this was done gipsy fashion—a long pole was run through the joint and supported at the ends, and an ash fire made underneath.

Paprika stew was the favourite meat dish—an event which seldom happened more than once a week. These people lived mainly on bread. A smoky lamp, used only in the depth of winter, was the sole means of illumination after dark. A more animal-like and comfortless existence it would be impossible to imagine. Its squalor was as appalling as the smells. It was easy to understand why nearly every family had a son who had gone to America to make his fortune. What was more difficult to understand was why they came back, as they so often did, and drifted once more into the old insanitary, uncomfortable ways. How people were ill or had babies in such places one dare not conceive.

Things, of course, are different in the towns, though goodness knows these are squalid enough. But most people have beds and a certain amount of furniture. The treasure of treasures among the poorer classes are sewing-machines and German-made wardrobes with mirror doors. These latter take the place of the piano in the hearts of our own working-people.

Monastir, in New Serbia, was the most interesting Macedonian town we saw. Most of it was very Turkish, the principal mosque was a quite imposing building, and the residential quarter contained many fascinating

houses and beautiful gardens. The shopping quarter, however, in spite of a big establishment here and there, was squalid. It is only fair to mention that we never had a chance to see the place under anything approaching normal conditions. With shells either screaming over the town or actually falling in it, marketing throngs do not assemble, timid shopmen keep their shutters up, and all those who can afford to, go elsewhere.

Those who had to stay suffered terribly. Besides the large numbers who had remained in Monastir during the Bulgar occupation, about which, by the way, we heard very few complaints, for days after it was taken the roads were crowded with refugees staggering back with their little all. But, alas, it was a case of out of the frying-pan into the fire! The enemy had not retreated as far as was expected. He had indeed left a scornful message behind that he would soon be returning. Monastir, of course, is one of the places he claims as "his" and has a great many Bulgar inhabitants. For that reason many people thought he would never shell it, and for some time he did not. Then he began to shell the approaches.

Business flagged. The Allies' hold was obviously so uncertain that the great shopping revival every one expected did not take place.

To earn a living became difficult, to fly was an impossibility, and the Bulgars had not left much behind in the way of food. The things he had left behind were spies and wireless installations and telephones—one of the latter, it was said, hidden under an altar !

Exactly what suffering went on inside the dirty houses in those narrow muddy streets will never be known, but the Allies were not long in grasping the situation. They sent up flour and other necessaries for the starving women and children, and the Serbian Relief Fund undertook its distribution as well as attending to the sick. Daily, brave girl-drivers drove Ford ambulances in and out under fire, and the heavy lorries of the British 688 M.T. Company, in spite of the shelling never failed to deliver their loads of flour.

Many a vehicle was hit with fragments of flying shrapnel, and several of the men drivers were wounded or killed. Major (then Captain) Warren Lambert and two of his men were awarded the Croix de Guerre, and a special Croix de Guerre was given to his Company as a whole for this service.

The shelling increased in intensity, but the French and British motor-drivers never faltered. So long as a starving population needed to be rationed, they were game to take the stuff up—

MOSQUE AT MONASTIR, WITH SHELL-HOLE IN DOME

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just as those young women were game to go in and bring out the sick and wounded.

Shells daily fell faster and faster. Monastir became a city of cellar-dwellers. Gas-shells, tear-shells, incendiary shells and shrapnel were all poured in at any odd hour of the day or night, culminating in a grand effort on the day of the Salonica conflagration, when over four hundred houses were set on fire.

Before leaving Monastir it may be well to refer to a visit paid to the city in June, 1918. Transport in Macedonia in war-time is of necessity a rather happy-go-lucky business for passengers. The ordinary traveller has to chance his or her arm on getting a lift on something going the way desired. That was how it came about that we were asked to take with us an English girl who wanted to get back to the Serbian Relief Hospital.

Arrived at the once beautiful and now shamefully dilapidated Queen of Macedonian cities, our passenger hospitably invited us to tea. We accepted, and so came to something that we shall never forget.

Tea was in a cellar—most of these Balkan houses have big cellars for coolness and for the storage of wine and the winter supply of maize—of a big building badly damaged by shell-fire. Half a dozen women sat down to it—bread and

jam and tea—all English and all heroines. They lived there, miles away from any fellow-countrymen, with a man and a woman doctor to relieve the destitute and succour the sick and wounded civilians. What their life was like, how comfortless, how nerve-racking, it is not hard to imagine. But they wouldn't like me to talk about that.

After tea they asked us if we would like to see "the children" and took us into another long, low cellar, turned into a hospital ward.

There were twenty beds on each side of that cellar, and each was occupied. By what? By sick children? No: one could easily forget the sight of forty sick children, since sickness is the lot of all at times. Those forty children, ranging in age from two to seven, were all wounded by wanton enemy shell-fire. Some in the legs, some in the head, some in the chest. Forty children between two and seven years old —Serbs, Bulgars, Turks and Greeks—dirty little imps who had been playing in the street, there they lay, tended by these devoted women, who lived in constant danger themselves.

"Our beds are always full," said the Sister—and one visioned a ghastly procession of shattered infants, maimed to the glory of the ex-Kaiser, and those brave German gunners who could do such execution on a defenceless

Serbian town. It was not Bulgars who fired those guns. They never wanted to destroy Monastir, because they hoped against hope some day to get it back. Their eyes had never ceased to covet it since they were forced to give it up. It was Germans—for spite, and spite and frightfulness alone. It is only a little item in a long bill, of course. But shall it go unpaid ?

Except for special points of interest, one Macedonian town is very like another. Veria, for instance, has the steps from which St. Paul preached—and very neglected and ruined they are. It will not have even what remains of them much longer, unless something is done. French horses were tethered round them at the time of our visit. It has also a modern factory, as has Naoussa, not very far away. Both of these are very successful concerns. Naoussa has some fine waterfalls, situated in particularly beautiful surroundings. But this is not a guide-book. Veria, Florina, Naoussa, Yenidje-i-Vardar and Vodena are alike in the chief aspects of life they present to the casual view.

The streets were always narrow and dirty in the shopping centre. The shops themselves were dark, windowless places with insanitary, mysterious and dingy interiors. Greengrocers

were plentiful. The baker's oven was in full view in the centre of the establishment, and always of the burnt-ash type. Little general shops were the most favoured, and some of these were very well set out when one got inside. Coppersmiths, tinsmiths and blacksmiths did all their work in the public view. Nearly everybody sat on his haunches. Drapers were everywhere, mostly selling Austrian goods —and denying it. Every town had a furrier or two with mangy skins exposed outside. It was all very poor and sordid and interesting. Veiled Turkish women and unveiled Macedonians, Mohammedans in their fez, Macedonians in their long blouses, Greeks in ordinary civilian garb, and dirty Jews who seemed unable to part from their fur coats in the hottest weather—all mixed indiscriminately in a hotchpotch seasoned with French, British, Russian, Greek, Italian and Serbian soldiers.

Prices were terrible. The Macedonian is an excellent business man. He can grasp his opportunity with the best, and unblushingly demand a shilling for a cabbage—and get it too! He also appears to have considerable difficulty in reckoning in his own coinage. Change is almost invariably a penny or twopence short, and his scales would never satisfy an Inspector of Weights and Measures. Yet, on

the other hand, if he sees you don't care for, say, *his* cherries, he will obligingly inform you where you can get better ones !

There is practically nothing worth purchasing in the way of curios, except at special places like Kossana, where they cater for that sort of thing.

Another strange figure in town and country alike is the Greek priest, or pope, as is his local title. "Papa's" long black gown and queer black hat, and long hair, single him out for observation everywhere. There seem to be a good many of him, and nearly all are very dirty.

Mostly the popes are of the peasant class, and like their Muslim brethren add to their slender incomes by running a small farm or vineyard. It was only in the rarest instances that we discovered one who spoke any language but his own.

Their churches are all crowded with icons, and the walls are usually covered with paintings. Dark blue and gold were the favourite colour scheme, but the workmanship was very poor. Few of the icons were worth a second glance from the artistic point of view, and the taste displayed in the mural painting was often as crude as the execution. One picture in a little village church at Straischte struck us as

particularly grim. It was a highly coloured representation of a man being sawn asunder.

In most of these village churches there were no seats. Men and women were kept separate. The women worshipped from a balcony above, the men stood in a body below. For the older men a curious sort of stall was provided. They did not sit, but stood, resting their elbows on supports provided for the purpose.

Gipsies are common in Macedonia but not quite so common as storks. The latter are everywhere, and build their nests on the thatched roofs unmolested. Once we saw a huge flock of them on the marshy wastes near Salonica—and, of course, had a tame one attached to our camp, a dreary-looking dirty-plumaged bird with a sadly pessimistic eye. "Mikra," one of our many dogs, was very interested in him, but he only flapped his wings at her scornfully.

The most interesting gipsies I came across were a group of Rumanians. Rising one morning at four I breakfasted at five with Dr. Pantovitch, a Serbian friend, on cold fresh-water fish that had been wrapped in young green vine leaves after cooking to give it a flavour. Then we rode for four hours up a mountain track to a forest where a company of Serbian Engineers were felling timber. It was an interesting if rather

breakneck trip, with magnificent panoramas of wood, stream and mountain unfolding themselves at every turn of the winding track.

The idea in starting so early was to get most of the travelling over before it became really hot. But even so the heat was appalling, and in spite of General Routine Orders Sam Browne was not worn very long, and dry and dusty lips were wetted at cool mountain streams whose water had neither been chlorinated nor boiled.

On reaching the camp in the forest we were at once regaled with "Slatka." This is not nearly so formidable or intoxicating as it sounds. It consists of a spoonful of preserved figs or cherries, followed by a glass of clear, cold spring water. The sweet syrupy preserve seems to make the water doubly refreshing. The man who invented "Slatka" was undoubtedly an artist of the palate. The Serbians, by the way, drink a great deal of water.

After surveying the enemy's position, we watched the Serbian woodmen at work. One of the surprises of modern warfare is the realization of the amount of timber required. Here they were shaping stakes for "the wire," cutting props for the trenches, poles for telephone-wires, baulks for bridges, "uprights" of various thicknesses, and planking of all sorts of descriptions for sheds, bridge-repairing, dug-outs and

dozens of other purposes. All this work was being done by hand in saw-pits with glorified fret-saws. Why is it that only the English and the Americans use a saw of solid steel ?

Lunch followed. The lunch has nothing to do with Rumanian gipsies, but it may as well go down.

It began with cheese made from sheep's milk —soft, salty, mild and inoffensive. This was followed by a very good giblet broth, and a dish of minced meat, stewed in young vine leaves, and served in appetizing rolls. Then came the chief item. This was a lamb, roasted in the Haiduk manner, the Haiduks being old-time Serbian outlaws who preyed on the rich and were kind to the poor ; very like our Robin Hood —rebel bands who made things generally uncomfortable for their Turkish conquerors and helped to keep the national spirit alive during the period of Serbia's eclipse.

An ash-fire was made in a shallow trench ; a long pole was run lengthways through the lamb and supported at each end on low wooden trestles. The cook crouched to leeward and kept this rude roasting-jack turning by hand, stirring the ashes to let the wind fan the fire whenever it showed signs of dying down.

The result was a most appetizing roast. Still transfixed on the pole it was roasted on, the

lamb was brought to the table, and one cut off for oneself the parts one most fancied amid a certain amount of anxiety as to where the grease was dripping. As is the Serbian way, the guest of honour sat at the head of the table—a humble "one-pipper" thus ousting a full-blown Colonel, my good friend Colonel Yoakimovitch.

There was a good deal more lunch—there always is—much and seldom, not little and often, is the Serbian motto. But the Rumanians have been waiting so long that the other courses must go unsung. Suffice it to record that the meal ended as it began, with cheese.

There are a fair number of Rumanians in Macedonia. Like many of the Macedonians themselves they generally live in the towns during the winter, and spend the summer months in the hills.

This particular encampment was situated in a lovely forest glade. It consisted of rough bivouacs made either of canvas or gaudily striped rugs. The women were sturdy rather than beautiful, picturesque rather than clean. All of them wore a large silver ornament on the top of their head, mostly with silver coins round it. Practically all the younger women also sported an oval-shaped gold ornament in the centre of their foreheads.

Whether they walked or talked or sat, they were always spinning—if that is the proper name for it. Fleece, white or black, is combed out into a fluffy mass on a many-toothed square frame. This is placed on a long stick, or distaff, and by twisting the fleece in their fingers as it is turned by a heavy revolving bobbin they spin it into a woollen thread. That is the best description of the business I can manage.

The women do nothing but this wool work and women's ordinary domestic duties. The men attend to the flocks entirely. They milk the sheep and the goats themselves and cut firewood—and consider that a fair division of the labour.

The children were numerous, pretty and shy. Two of them were strangely beautiful with vivid copper-red hair. Enquiries elicited the startling information that it was dyed! These children, it seemed, were too fair—practically albinos—so their mothers dyed their hair to hide their shame! English blondes, please note.

The acquiring of this information had one unexpected result. The interpreter, Major-Doctor Pantovitch, our host, was a Serbian surgeon of some note. Directly it became known that he spoke Rumanian and was a doctor the trouble began.

Out of the dark, smelly bivouacs flocked the sick and the suffering, and one realized with a pang that the picturesque are often very unhealthy. And one wondered how these people could possibly go about their tasks day after day, week after week, suffering without remedy or attention. The beauties of that forest encampment and the glories of the real Simple Life were suddenly dimmed. Here were old women with cataract, and young ones with cancer—with no surgeon's knife to alleviate their pain. Here were rheumatism, jaundice, malaria, phthisis and many other hideous things scattered among young and old—and not a drug to relieve them. The poor doctor did what he could and gave what he had—but for me the romance was gone from the Rumanian gipsies for ever. It was all so cruelly unnecessary, so—but this is a " soldier's " account of what he saw in Macedonia.

On the way back we were overtaken by a thunderstorm just as we were approaching a mountain village. Shelter was an obvious necessity as we were only clad in thin drill, so we took the first that came to hand, which happened to be a Greek school.

It consisted of two rooms, both class-rooms, and both with beds in them—wooden beds with neither heads nor feet. What would H.M.

Inspector of Schools say if he found the master's and mistress's beds in the class-room? The only educational appliances visible were a small blackboard, in one room, a blackboard without a stand, stuck up in the only window, and a kindergarten bead-frame in the other. The schoolmaster and his wife and baby lived in one room, and a teacher and her mother in the other. Neither of the women had any pretence to beauty, nor did they wear stays. They were very kind to us, however, and insisted on making coffee which was got out from a locker under the master's bed. The baby was a dear, but very dirty.

While we sipped our coffee a tall, dingy figure suddenly entered. He was the Mayor of the village, determined not to be left out of any excitement that was going, a gentleman of much dignity, alive to the responsibilities of his position. He stood there in a corner by the door, grim and silent after solemnly shaking hands all round, and remained sheepishly and obstinately present till we departed.

Talking of Mayors reminds me of the Mayor of another and much larger village. There was a presence for you—there a true natural dignity if you like! We met first over a question of eggs. He deigned to shake hands. His hand was not so clean as mine, but he graciously overlooked

that. He deigned to smile, to take a cigarette and a match; and grandly and gravely he puffed at it while negotiations proceeded.

It was very hot, but he wore a short fur coat, very greasy, to denote his rank. The Serbians paid him five francs a day to keep order for them and see that the requisite labour for road-making was found when required. He dealt in eggs as if they were kingdoms. A massive-framed corpulent man, with flat features and bright eyes, his air was too regal even for a Prussian princeling.

We made our treaty—to say struck our bargain would be too absurd.

He accepted another cigarette.

Every day twenty-five eggs would be waiting for us, price twopence each.

We shook hands and parted.

For three days the eggs were there. Then there were only ten. Blandly unconcerned His Majesty took another cigarette—and the price was twopence-halfpenny.

For three days again the eggs were there. Then there were only five. This time His Majesty did not get another cigarette, and the price did not rise to threepence. I was dallying no more with kings. Some courier had, no doubt, informed him that eggs were fivepence in Salonica!

He bore me no ill-will. With the same grave dignity and the same royal smile he saluted me whenever I rode through his territory. I shall never forget him as long as I live—nor cease to wonder that so much dignity and so much dirt could exist together.

# THE SERBIANS

## THE NEW CHUM

PTE. SMITH GIVES HIS OPINION, BASED ON A TWO AND A HALF YEARS' FRIENDSHIP, OF THE SERB

My aunt! but it ain't 'arf a beano
To be in the Balkans just now,
With five nations mopping up Vino,
And toasting each other " Bow-wow! "
Oh, Babel was nix to the Balkans,
But still we ain't sorry we come,
For we've learned quite a lot in this Gawd-forgot spot,
An' us British 'as made a New Chum.

The Frenchy is rather a ripper,
(An' frogs ain't so bad as you'd think),
The Dago will 'and you 'is flipper,
An' bow while 'e sez " 'Ave a drink? "
The Greeko's not bad when you know 'im,
('E ain't been a friend very long),
But the one we like best, though 'e ain't so well dressed,
Is the Serb—oh, the Serb is *tray bong!*

We sort of just took to each other
The very first time that we met.
And now 'e's our friend and our brother,
A pal we shall never forget!
We don't know a word of 'is lingo,
Bar " dobro " (that's Serbo for " good "),
But with that for a start, and a smile from the 'eart,
We can all make ourselves understood!

We turns up our nose at 'is liquor,
'E don't give a dam' for our beer,
But, by gum! in a scrap 'e's a sticker;
*We* know 'ow 'e took Monastir!
'E puts 'is boots over 'is putties,
'E sings like a tom-cat at night,
But 'e'd give us 'is shirt or lie down in the dirt,
Though 'e shaves 'isself less than 'e might.

It's orkard the way 'e is smitten,
The rummy affeckshunate cuss,
On ev'rything coming from Britain;
It's orkard—dam' orkard—for us!
'E's made us a sort of a Hidol,
So, as pals we must humour his whim.
'E thinks we're a saint, and we know that we ain't,
But we 'as to be while we're with 'im!

'Ere's *to* 'im, the soft-'earted blighter!
'Ere's to 'im, the son of a gun!
'E's "dobro" as friend and as fighter;
'E's second to abserloot none!
'Ere's *to* 'im, the grinning old cuckoo,
And the day we pump-'andle 'is 'and,
An' bid 'im good-bye with a tear in the eye,
On the soil of 'is own native land!

## CHAPTER XI

### THE SERBIANS

"GOOD old Serbo!" is Tommy's verdict, and Thomas Atkins seldom misses the mark when it comes to judging men.

When the War began most of us thought of the Serbs only as Balkan barbarians. Did not one of our most popular war-prophets placard the country with the tactful counsel: "To Hell with Serbia"?—for which, to do him justice, he has apologized like a man. That horrible murder of Alexander, last of the Obernovitch line, and his Queen, Draga, was practically all we knew of Serbian history, and it stuck in our gizzards. It certainly was a nasty business, and it certainly is and always will be a blot on Serbia's escutcheon. But there are a few things we ought not to forget. Mainly, it was a Militarist murder, and Militarism, as Germany has taught us, is equal to anything.

In the history of all nations there are glass-houses better whitewashed against the sun of curiosity than peered into or stoned. Modern

Serbia as a nation is young. Her history is hurried and tabloid, not leisurely like ours. Moreover, she has had the misfortune to make history in an age of telegraphy and a half-penny press. In the years since those brutal murders she has lived as long and learned as much as we have since the murder of the young Princes in the Tower or the burning of Joan of Arc. It is up to us now to forget these murders as we have forgotten those and many other incidents in our own history. Serbia has more than expiated them.

A clever physician, Dr. Barnes, of the 37th General Hospital, whose "recreation" was mathematics and who had learnt Serbian in his spare time, was standing with a Serbian officer one day watching some Greek soldiers march past.

"What are they? Volunteers?" inquired the Englishman.

"No, no—they're proper soldiers!" indignantly replied the Serb.

One is reminded of this excellent example of different points of view now that the time has come to make some attempt to describe our Serbian Allies. To us only our highly-trained Regular Army are "proper soldiers." Ask any volunteer or conscript enlisted for what he terms "the duraysh" if he calls himself a

soldier, and he will laugh in your face. In spite of its achievements—his achievements, by the way—the Briton as a whole has a sweeping, smiling contempt for the Army and all its works and ways.

The Serbs are "proper soldiers." Conscription is not new to them as to us. They accept it as part of the order of things. This means, of course, that their Army is very "mixed," and generalities about it are just as dangerous as generalities about our Army now.

In appearance, except on ceremonial occasions, the Serbian soldier is not smart. He does not shave as often as we do, officer or man. Till he got used to them, our clean chins amused him as much as his unshaven ones at first rather shocked us. He was not alone in this. On Active Service the French are equally good stubble cultivators.

He is very fond of wearing his boots over his putties. But he keeps his rifle clean. He carries a long three-cornered bayonet with which he puts in some excellent work when he gets the chance. He is a good artilleryman, a superb crawler up steep places, and an excellent bomb-thrower. It is said, indeed, that the hand-grenade has become his favourite weapon.

Mosquito-nets are not part of his equipment, as with the pampered British, though he suffers

from malaria as much as we do. Each man has his own light gipsy bivouac, which usually two or more join together when pitching camp. To Tommy's disgust his principal beverage is "veenoh," but he also drinks a great deal of water. His table manners are not exactly delicate—but in warm weather he takes a swim at every opportunity and washes his clothes as well! He slouches rather than marches, but can cover a lot of ground. Discipline is strict, but officers and men are much more free and easy when not actually on duty than is the case with us.

He has a beautiful friendly grin for all things British—and all the British like him as much as he likes them.

The officers are very mixed—like ours. Some are very smart and handsome, typical Continental—almost comic-opera—soldiers, especially the Cavalry. Others are studious and refined, and others, well, not! A few are Militarists—with a penchant for conspiracy. Even during the present campaign the notorious secret Militarist society of the Black Hand were at the back of an attempt to assassinate the Crown Prince. This occurred at the time of the Battle of Ostrovo, and some months later, after a fair trial, several were shot and others condemned to varying terms of imprisonment.

ROAD UNDER FIRE IN MONASTIR SCREENED FROM OBSERVATION BY SACKING

PRINCE ALEXANDER'S HUT AT PETALINO

The leaders are all good men. Field-Marshal Mishitch is as brilliant a tactician as any in Europe. The British have recognized his services with the Grand Cross of St. Michael and St. George—of which he is extremely proud. He is of peasant origin and learned French during the War so as to be able to communicate with the Allies without the aid of an interpreter. He was one of the heroes of Rudnik (1914), was chiefly responsible for the fall of Monastir, and had a great deal to do with the organization of the final offensive.

General Vassitch is another first-class soldier, who knows his job from A to Z. He speaks English, and 706 M.T. Company still remembers a delightful speech of his in which he wished them " Happy Christmas Days ! "

General Stepanovitch is also an excellent tactician, with a soul above martial trappings. He likes to spend his days in a very undress uniform, and his taciturnity has given rise to the saying that he speaks twenty words a day—whether he has anything to say or not.

After the generals come a crowd of keen, efficient soldiers whom it is impossible to name in these pages. The Serbian Army has made itself a most efficient war machine, and everybody not up to his job has been ruthlessly scrapped.

To return to more trivial things, the Serbian officer's way of performing his ablutions struck us as curious. His servant stood by with soap, water, and towel, and instead of the officer plunging his hands into the basin as we do the servant kept pouring water over his hands, quite in the Eastern manner.

But the most curious thing of all was undoubtedly the strange affinity which Serb and Briton have discovered for each other. Never before, I fancy, have two nations struck up such a genuine friendship. The Serb seems to like the British way and the British point of view. Heaven knows he had every reason to dislike it—but somehow he didn't. He never blamed us for letting him in. He accepted all that had happened to him as unavoidable, and had a most perfect faith in our ultimate victory and our intentions to look after him.

As far as one can gather, immediately things have settled down, at least half of the Serbian Army is coming to England !

Physically they are a fine race, tall, handsome, and tough. A nation of peasants—with no aristocracy as we know it, and no titles except in the Royal family—accustomed to a hard life in the open air, their powers of endurance are simply astonishing. Their manner is something unique, something that is and yet is not what

one thinks of as Democratic or Socialistic. They are free without being familiar, independent without being aggressive. Obviously each Serb considers he is as good as his neighbour, and has the gift of making his neighbour feel it, while at the same time paying enough deference to a superiority in wealth, army rank, brains, or social attainments. This is something very subtle and difficult to express—a touch of inborn genius which neither the American nor the Australian can rival. Psychologically, however, it is very important, and represents a great deal of his charm.

The Serb has his faults. Unpunctuality is one. A temptation to say "Yes" is another. Partly from politeness, partly from laziness, many Serbians are always ready to promise something rather than to refuse, in the hope that the other chap will go away and forget all about it or else that they may never see him again. Their attitude to women, too, is rather offensive to our ideas. Though better in this respect than either Greek or Bulgar, they have still much to learn. Incidentally, if you ask one of them how many children he has, he will say two, meaning two boys, though there may be a couple of girls as well. But they do not count.

One of their chief customs, religiously kept up even in war-time, is the Slava, the literal

meaning of which is " celebration." They have a proverb : " Where there is Slava, there is the Serb," and instance the fact that the custom prevails throughout Macedonia as one of their proofs that this much-disputed region is really Serbian.

Every Serb has a family patron Saint—the official religion of Serbia is the Greek Orthodox Church—and the day dedicated to that Saint is his own private Slava, as distinct from the public Slavas, of which there are many.

A Slava is a terrible thing to tax the capacity of a Western tummy. There is no escape. It is one of those things that must be seen through for the credit of one's race. Fighting and feasting are two things a Serbian does not do by halves. Usually a Slava commenced at eleven in the morning and finished in the small hours. Most of them began with a religious ceremony at which a cake is blessed by the pope, or priest. Then a special sweet confection is handed round, of which every one takes a spoonful, and the serious business of feasting begins. Dish follows dish till one wonders if one will ever be allowed to stop. The cooking is excellent, even on Active Service, the pastries and cakes being particularly good. At last a pause is reached, possibly a few speeches are made, very short and to the point. Then one settles down to

conversation for a while, or soldiers sing their melancholy Slav songs, or dance the Kolo, in which everybody joins. Wine is there all the time, and fruit and extra dishes keep turning up at intervals. Everybody is very happy and childlike, and considering all things, wonderfully sober. But the Briton goes home, when at last they will let him, having learnt something he didn't know before—how much one can eat when one tries.

In the ordinary way, however, the Serb is not a big eater. The number of our meals always amused him. Breakfast and tea are practically unknown. Their equivalent for both is a tiny cup of Turkish coffee. They eat only at midday and in the evening.

They are a surprisingly moral race on Active Service. One never heard the least whisper of trouble with the women in the villages, though they moved about among them freely. Partly this was no doubt explained by a very curious and widespread superstition. They believe that any soldier who indulges himself in the lusts of the flesh will assuredly be killed the next time he goes into action. This is almost an article of faith with the rank and file.

They are supposed to be very revengeful and to have a terrible hatred for their rivals, the treacherous Bulgars. We saw nothing of this.

They were, indeed, very British in the way they regarded the enemy. He was there to be fought with, but once the fight was over the enmity was over too. They had many prisoners—Germans, Bulgars and Turks—and they were uniformly kind to them all. Their food was good, their quarters the same as their own, and the guards did not overdrive them when at work on the roads. The prisoners' readiness to smile, and their friendship with their custodians told their own tale. In the camp at Seres, indeed, during the 1918 Easter festivities, the Bulgarian prisoners and the Serbian soldiers danced the Kolo together. But, of course, that evil sprite that mocks at the hopes of amateur photographers arranged that the two snapshots I tried to make of this historic occasion should be failures!

Yet if ever a nation had cause to be revengeful, Serbia certainly had. Twice their land had been overrun by the foe, and many terrible atrocities had unquestionably been committed. But it was very difficult to get them to talk about these things, and never did they express any wish to do the same to the enemy if ever they had the chance.

One story made a great impression on us. There was a certain Serbian manufacturer, rich, old, and with a well-appointed house. To

his mansion came the Austrians, and announced bluntly that food and beds must be provided for so many officers. This was done without demur, and to the dinner prepared for these unwelcome guests the old manufacturer and his wife were bidden to sit down.

It was an excellent dinner, and the old man played his difficult part of host to his country's enemies with great tact and skill. Then came toasts. He was commanded to drink the Austrian Kaiser's health—which he did, out of politeness. Then he was ordered to drink to the Downfall of Serbia! Gently he begged to be excused. It was his country. His guests insisted. Tearfully the old man's wife implored those Austrian officers and gentlemen not to press their shameful command. White and trembling the old man sat before his unraised glass.

The guests laughed and threatened and blustered. But the old hero stuck to his refusal.

So one of them drew his sword and killed him, and another slew his wife. And the others, having got their blood up, murdered as many of the relations as they could find, and then went somewhere else to sleep.

One has read that sort of story in many a magazine—with a slightly different ending.

Here no deliverance came at the eleventh hour, nor, as far as one knows, was any terrible doom the fate of the drunken brutes who ran amok because an old man would not drink to the downfall of his king and country.

The Crown Prince was very active during the whole campaign. Usually attended by only one aide-de-camp, his car was always turning up at various sectors of the front. When there was anything doing, he was always on hand. He appeared to be very popular, and, like his subjects, had a friendly smile for a British uniform.

It may be of interest to describe one visit paid to the trenches, which will serve to show the sort of line the Serbs had to hold. The journey began with a three-hours' climb on horseback up a steep track, with wonderful panoramic views of rock and forest. We halted at Divisional Headquarters, only four hundred metres from the firing line.

Lunch was served—a Slava lunch. The best of being a Briton among the Serbs was that the mere fact of one's nationality overrode all questions of rank. We were three "one pippers" then—Whitelaw and Bakes from the British Battery and the writer, but we sat down as honoured guests of the Staff. The writer had expressed a casual wish one day at

an O.Pip to see these particular trenches, and this hospitable invitation was the result.

The lunch was too good to be left out. It began, as usual, with cheese. Then came veal broth, followed by a meat dish with rice and strips of pastry, a kind of home-made macaroni, and accompanied by a perfectly wonderful sauce. Then came a potato cream, alone and delicious, like a thick silky broth—a gastronomic revelation. This was followed by steak, with rice, beetroot, tomato, horse-radish, marrow, and paprika—a dish of many colours. Then came a cheese pastry, very flaky and light, and stewed pears and coffee. All this, four hundred metres from the enemy, for three humble second-lieutenants—who showed their appreciation in the usual way !

After that, the trenches. They were in the wood on the crest of a high hill—the whole Serbian line there was among the peaks. The trees were badly knocked about by shell-fire. In this particular sector the enemy was at no place more than three hundred metres away, for a long stretch it was only one hundred and forty metres to his trenches, and at the nearest point the distance was only thirty metres. Naturally conversation was not encouraged in the latter region. Each side had snipers always on duty, and one peeped through the sandbags at those

other sandbags and barbed wire only thirty metres away and thought how utterly sick both sides must be of the view. Presently, when the distance between was a little greater, our side let off a big trench mortar to entertain its guests. But even then we had to bolt for cover from the shower of stones and dirt that came back to our own trench from the enemy's after the explosion! Well-concealed machine-guns were everywhere, so were rifles stacked ready loaded, waiting to be seized at the first word of alarm from the sentries on guard.

For a couple of hours we wandered through that network of trenches, shaking hands with delightful, cheery young officers and accepting souvenirs from grinning, cheery men. We saw their eating and sleeping places—we saw everything—all grim and comfortless and business-like, nothing elaborate, none of your electric light and concrete dug-outs, no gangways even through the mud. This was war on the cheap, war at its nastiest and grimmest, war as the Serbian Army has had to make it all the time! And those troops didn't know what a relief was! They weren't in the trenches for four days at a time. They had been there eight months—through winter into summer—and their only prospect was to stay there for another winter. An advance was as much out of the

MAJOR PANTOVITCH

OBSERVATION POST IN MOUNTAINS CUNNINGLY CONCEALED,
AND NEVER DISCOVERED BY THE BULGARS

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

question as a relief. What life had been like up there during the winter one was afraid to think. Yet no troops could have been less stale. Daily there was a steady drain of casualties. A neat cemetery in the woods behind, among splintered trees and surrounded by shell-holes, told its own tale.

A doctor up there had filled in his spare time by learning English from books. But he had never spoken a word of it to an Englishman till we appeared, and then he spoke it quite well, though occasionally his pronunciation, learnt from a book, was somewhat startling. To learn English was a favourite recreation with the Serbian Army. Hundreds of them were hard at it, every moment they had to spare. Another doctor, Major Pontovitch, used to haunt our camps and the British hospitals and practise shamelessly upon us and the doctors and nurses—especially the nurses—his apology taking the form of " I kill you with mine English." Like all his race, his one desire was to help us, and many were the kindnesses for which we were indebted to him.

These particular trenches and their bare, comfortless state were no exception to the rule. All the Serbian line was like that. They had very few ambulances close up, beyond those driven by the girl drivers of the Serbian Relief

and the Scottish Women's Hospitals, who did splendid work, and certain American units, most of which did not arrive, however, till the rush was over. Their wounded had to jolt down to the clearing stations on mules and in Ford vans and heavy lorries. In the same way, in the trenches, they were short of all comforts not absolutely necessary. There was no money for war's luxuries. Exiled and impoverished, they had to depend upon the Allies for everything, and though they were well fed and well supplied with ammunition they did undeniably go short of many things which would have made their hard lot among the unfriendly mountains easier; which, of course, only makes their glorious resistance the more wonderful.

The outstanding, the astonishing fact about them is that, in spite of all they had suffered and lost, their hearts should never have failed. At Christmas, 1917, the Germans again offered them terms—splendid terms; but though the politicians had a little family crisis among themselves, soon settled by their aged and astute Premier, M. Pashitch, the soldiers never even dallied with the tempting offer. Loyalty seems to be a word which the Serbs understand as well as any nation in the world. All through the War no Ally could possibly have been more absolutely loyal, ready at any time

to make any sacrifice for the good of the joint cause.

Undoubtedly they are a fine and a fascinating race, and it is a pity that we do not know more about them. Serbia is their religion much more than the Greek Orthodox Church. They have faith in their country and themselves. They mean Serbia some day to be a great nation, mean it passionately, with a determination that will not be denied.

No longer can they be thought of as ignorant, superstitious peasants. War and sacrifice have educated and developed them; poverty has chastened them. All these years of bitter fighting and misfortune have wrought a change in their Slavonic temperament. In mud and blood, with everything lost and their loved ones in the clutches of the enemy, they have lived with a Dream. The vision of a Greater Serbia, of a fusion of all their blood brothers into a new and powerful Southern Slav Empire that shall settle the Balkan Question and make them great has sustained them in their unexampled sufferings.

Brave and simple, genial and generous, always facing their Fate with heads that were "bloody but unbowed"; all out to win, from the old men crippled with rheumatism who marched beside the pack-mules, to the young and sturdy

soldiers on the peaks amid the snow or knee-deep in the muddy, wind-swept trenches, making war as cheaply as possible so as not to increase their beloved country's burdens—is it to be wondered at that those of us who had the privilege of seeing them wax lyrical in their praise? Thomas Atkins is a wonderfully discriminating and trustworthy person in bulk. He does not wear his heart upon his sleeve, and he does not give his friendship to everybody. But, officer and man, when he has come in contact with them, he has given it whole-heartedly to the Serbs.

Snow, rain, scorching sun, and blinding dust, malaria and dysentery; in the face of an enemy perched high above them, they have endured these things, and in the end driven the enemy from his fastness as well. And all the time they have loved us and had faith in us. On us they have striven to model themselves, admiring our ways and our tranquillity and openly seeking to copy them, crediting us with all sorts of virtues that it is to be hoped that we possess. Conscious of their defects, pathetically eager for development and improvement, the wish of their hearts is that Britain will be their instructor and helper.

It is on us that their eyes are turned, these good fellows, these clean fighters and faithful

friends, now that Serbia's future is in the hands of the Allies. They are waiting with trustful hearts to see what we are going to do for them.

Heaven forbid that I should be thought to want to paint them as a race of wistful angels. There were black sheep among them as among all flocks. But, taken in the mass, nobody could help liking them or fail to have faith in them. And one of the most appealing traits about them is the fact that they are by nature givers rather than takers. Do something for a Serb and he wants to do something for you. Among them that most doubtful of virtues, gratitude, really does seem to exist. They proved this in a hundred ways. There they were, in eclipse, dependent upon the Allies for everything. One might naturally have expected them to take all they could, and let it go at that. But give a Serb anything, and he must immediately give you something in return to show his appreciation. So, having nothing else to give, he gave himself, freely and ungrudgingly.

One of the best examples of this was the Serbian Royal Orchestra. Under Major Binitchki and Captain Raindla, the Court orchestra of sixty instrumentalists had retreated through Albania with the rest of the Army, losing all its valuable instruments on the way. Somehow or other fresh instruments were got together,

and during 1917 the orchestra was hard at work in Salonica helping the Allies to bear their unhappy lot. They were a fine body of musicians, really first-class, and they played at all the hospitals, and went about in jolting motor-lorries giving concerts at the various camps, all for love. It was not part of their job ; it meant late hours, much extra work, and no extra money ; but they did it again and again and again—and did it as if they loved it ! The Salonica forces are indebted to that orchestra for many a splendid musical evening. It is to be hoped that some day they really will carry out their intention and come to London.

The Court pianist, M. Yovanovitch, an artist of the very highest rank, adopted the same generous attitude. Though eaten up with malaria, he would go out to play to the British on any old piano that would just pass muster. I only knew him to jib once, and that was at a concert in a French hospital where Essid Pasha was present. Poor M. Yovanovitch was expected to play a Chopin concerto on a wretched little upright grand that tinkled like a musical box and had a pitch half a tone lower than the orchestra. Naturally, it couldn't be done, and the outraged artist went sorrowfully away, and the sympathies of the musicians in the audience went with him.

One incident typical of this paying-back attitude of the Serbians is too good to be omitted. A certain subaltern wandered along to the Serbian orchestra's camp one evening, and found them in their big barrack-hut eating their suppers in the dark. They had no paraffin. The French, who supplied them, had run out, and the price in the shops of Salonica was ten shillings a gallon !

That subaltern had been an honest man when he joined the Army, but the Army had altered him. He was now a shameless thief (Have the mothers of Britain taken it in that they sent to crush the Germans—five million thieves ?) Promptly he " pushed off " to his own camp, and returned with a four-gallon tin of paraffin. There was nothing in that. Any one with paraffin on charge would have done the same, and cooked the accounts in the morning.

Has the Exchequer and Audit Office grasped the fact that the Army system of accounting is the most elaborate in the world—and the most faked ?

But mark the sequel. That subaltern had a birthday the following week, and the Serbian orchestra came and gave him and his friends a three-hour concert to celebrate it, and brought M. Yovanovitch with them ! It would have cost two hundred and fifty pounds at least to

give such a concert in England! That was how the orchestra paid back for four gallons of paraffin!

And that incident is typical of the Serb.

## CHAPTER XII

### THE DELIVERANCE

THE end is soon told. After the fall of Monastir, there followed many weary months among the hills. It froze and thawed and rained, and the Serbian Army reorganized in the mud—as usual, on the cheap. For them there was no lavish issue of thick winter underclothing ; no Campaign comforts. But they contented themselves with absolute necessaries and waited hopefully for the spring.

Spring came, with winds that bit one moment and sun that burnt the next—but there was no advance. Something had happened to the Spring offensive. There was a nibble here and a demonstration there ; much carrying-up of ammunition, many rumours, but no tangible result.

Then summer came—scorching, dusty, and debilitating—with malaria, dysentery, and jaundice in its train.

So the months passed. The guns barked, the trench mortars boomed, and the rifles cracked—

to keep their hands in. Life was very dreary, and all the time there was a steady stream of casualties and a horrible death-roll from disease. But the line hardly moved. In a few places the Serbs improved their position. Nowhere were they pushed back. Where the enemy held one line of hills and the Serbians another, there was no change; where the Bulgars were on top and the Serbs half-way up, our Allies crept a little higher. The Russians failed us; the Italians put up a splendid see-saw struggle for Hill 1050; the British hammered away on the Doiran and the Struma sectors. There was a tremendous bombardment in the autumn and much talk of a big general advance, but nothing came of it. It was stalemate in the Balkans all through 1917.

So 1918 brought another winter among the mountains, and new hopes. But they, too, died away. The Spring offensive fizzled out. Black news came from the Western Front, and the Balkans rallied to a man. If the faith of the people at home faltered, it certainly did not out there, neither among the French, the British, nor the Serbs. Somehow every one seemed to know by instinct that this was the hour before the dawn. Here and there, no doubt, a head shook, but the majority of heads were held a little higher, excepting among the enemy. His

head went down, in spite of the good news which Germany was sending him.

Explain it how you will, there it is. At the time of the German high-water mark, at the very hour when he was flushed with success, the Balkans reacted perversely. The Allies squared their shoulders; the Bulgars became depressed.

There had been a change in the High Command. General Sarrail had been succeeded by General Guillamaut, and men began to whisper of what Guillamaut intended to do. It was on everybody's lips. It was in the air. The Bulgars were war weary. Even the victories in the West could not put new heart into them. Daily the conviction grew. Daily incident after incident increased our confidence, and quiet, unassuming—and misleading—preparations were begun.

The story changed in the West. General Guillamaut was recalled to a command in France, and General Franchet D'Esprey came out to carry on with Guillamaut's plans.

There was a big and rather too obvious concentration of guns on the British Front. The Greeks, daily becoming keener and pathetically anxious to show their mettle and to make friends, were hurried up to the Front; and on September 14th the blow fell.

It was delivered by the Serbs. After twenty-four hours' bombardment by the whole of the Serbian artillery and a great number of French heavy field guns, a break through was effected on the 15th from Bahavo to Sokol on the front of the Second Serbian Army. This was the front before which even the Serbs had been held up ever since the campaign in the Balkans began. It included a series of heavily fortified mountain positions—Dobropoli, Vetrenik, Kozjak, and Sokol—which the Serbians had stared at despairingly for two and a half years, and suffered many casualties in vain efforts to capture. But reinforced now by several thousand Jugo-Slav volunteers, mostly Austrian-trained subjects to whom capture meant death; spurred on by a desperate feeling that this was the psychological moment, that if only this blow could be hammered well home the end was in sight; grimly resolute in the spirit of a forlorn hope—this wonderful Serbian Army scaled and took one by one all those strongly defended "impregnable" heights, in spite of a desperate resistance on the part of the enemy.

It was another amazing achievement; how amazing, once more, only those who have seen can understand. One feels that one's enthusiasm is damaging—but truth is truth. Go out

and see; ask any one who knows. These people are astounding as soldiers, astounding in either attack or defence. They take mountains as hypochondriacs take pills—at the gulp. But nobody can understand, nobody can possibly understand who has not seen.

It was the beginning of the end. "Thanks to the heroic and determined attack"—I quote from one of their official reports to show how generously they appreciate their Allies—"made by British and Greek detachments under the command of General Milne at the Doiran sector, where considerable Bulgarian forces were pinned up, the Franco-Serbian Armies were enabled to pierce the Bulgarian centre."

Never a moment was allowed to the enemy to rally. One thing that the Serbs know in war above all others is how to exploit a success. Within a week they were across the Vardar between Gradsko and Demir Kapu, dominating the main bridge-heads on the left bank of the river. The bruised and bewildered Bulgar did what he could to stem the tide. To do him justice, he is a good fighter. But the Serbs had no intention of being stemmed. Here was what they had been praying for all these years—the enemy on the run. The Serbian Independent Cavalry Division, rejoicing that their chance had come at last, carried on a brilliantly

successful harrying pursuit. The other Serbian Army group, not to be left behind, succeeded in establishing itself on the Radobilj–Pestami Kamen line.

These advances, assisted by Allied troops on both wings, resulted in the enemy beginning on the night of September 21st a general retirement on the whole Doiran–Monastir line. He could do nothing else. The breach in his front had been widened ; the wedge was well driven in, the wedge with French weight behind it and a Serbian cutting-edge in front ; and the crossing of the Vardar and Cerna rivers had cut his main line of communication.

There was no pause. This time the Serbs were determined there should be no mistake. The pursuit continued unflaggingly ; almost recklessly. The Allies " co-operated," but it was the Serbs who did the main work, and did it with a gallantry, endurance, and speed that have hardly been realized.

The enemy lost his head. The rot set in. Confusion reigned in his harried, war-weary ranks, confusion tempered by Bolshevism. Prisoners and material were captured daily and scornfully passed back down the line without being counted. Ever the advance continued. Rear-guard actions were brushed aside. Hastily-gathered reinforcements were engaged, defeated,

broken up, and driven from hill to valley and valley to hill. Sternly those indefatigable Serbs pressed on—welcomed by their liberated fellow-countrymen with open arms, shocked by the tales they heard and the things they saw—on, on they went, deeper and deeper into Serbia' eating up the miles, which were almost all there was to eat, scorning sleep, fighting, marching, marching, fighting—delivering three-fourths of their country in a fortnight !

As this narrative has not the slightest pretence to be a military history, it is needless to give a list of the names of that long pursuit. Nor is this the place to describe the admirable work done by the French, the Italians, the Greeks, and the British. What followed, every one knows. Bulgaria collapsed. After the freedom of Serbia there followed the freedom of the World.

It is only a little thing, but even here the unlucky Serb was as unlucky as ever. In Britain—whose praise and recognition were more to him than those of any other of his Allies—our eyes were turned from the splendour of his last, characteristic achievement to more personal events that were happening in the East. Before we had time to realize what he had done and how strenuous and astonishing had been his last task, the news of our magnificent

victories against the Turks came over the wires —and Serbian affairs had second place.

But what of that ? Though Serbia may have been unlucky in always having a " bad Press," though during the War her story may have missed gripping the imagination of the populace, time and history must do her justice. If she was the beginning, she was also the beginning of the end. The first real victory of the War, Rudnik, was hers, and the victory that began the final break-up was Serbian as well. One after the other Germany's Allies followed the Bulgarian lead, and the World found itself in the throes of the greatest anti-climax in history.

The Stage had been set for a great curtain. But the principals slunk off like the musicians in that piece of Haydn's where one by one the orchestra blow out their candles and depart. The War ended not on a thunderous chord of Victory, but in an eerie silence—an Armistice that was miscalled a Peace. There was shouting and there were bells, but at the back of most people's minds there was bewilderment, disappointment—anti-climax, in short.

The early days of 1919 were curiously peaceful and disturbed. The play had gone wrong ; the players were at sixes and sevens. Humanity's chief craving was apparently still its old pathetic one—to be good. It wanted a religion

and a leader. But like a child who has become too sophisticated for a Punch and Judy show, no creed could satisfy it, and no leader was strong enough or stern enough for its taste.

It was reaction, of course—the reaction which follows attainment. Only that which is unattained is exciting. The World had to be remade by the Peace Conference, and after the strenuous days of Armageddon nobody liked waiting. The guns had ceased, the thrones had fallen ; action had given place to talk. And talk is so dull.

Yet on that talk depends the future of the World. The result of that talk will show whether the World has been deceived into shedding its blood and tears and years for something or nothing. And a side-issue of that talk, one of the many problems the Peace Conference has to decide is the future of Serbia.

At the moment they have an Army of Occupation in Hungary, holding territory which corresponds more or less with their aspirations. This occupation was carried out in perfect order. The Serb in victory has shown himself as magnanimous as he is steadfast in defeat. He has, indeed, displayed an amenity that has amazed the Magyars. Such mildness is unknown to them. " Where the Magyar troops have set

foot the very earth has groaned. The ruins in Serbia are to a very large extent their work. For generations to come, devastated villages and countless graves will be the hideous monuments of their martial prowess," declares an official report. But the Serbians have no desire to "get their own back," barbarians though they are supposed to be.

A Magyar paper, the *Az Est*, of November 27th, 1918, reveals the principles by which the Serbian Army of Occupation is guided. The correspondent of the paper interviewed Colonel Savatitch, Officer Commanding in Temeshvar, who said to him :

"My mother, who is an old woman of sixty, was at the beginning of the War taken from Shabatz to Szeglod where she was interned. For four years she lived in the greatest misery, housed in a building no better than a stable. I shall weep when I remember that. For all that, the thought of vengeance has not for one moment entered my mind. The Magyar and Austrian soldiers, and the Germans in even greater measure, have laid waste our land, scattered our families over the face of the earth, and ruined our country. But we do not intend to repay them in like fashion. The war has stricken us all. The work of destruction and slaughter must not begin all over again. There must be no more tears."

To these words the correspondent adds the following comment :

" These principles laid down by Colonel Savatitch are the same as President Wilson's, and we must admit that he lives up to them. He does his duty in a kindly and considerate way."

The correspondent further says :

" So far the Serbian troops have requisitioned nothing. They draw upon their own stores or buy in the market, paying cash and full price for the goods they need. The Serbian officers avoid everything which might offend the national susceptibilities of the Magyars or Germans living in these parts."

This attitude of the vanquished is doubly interesting when one remembers the appalling atrocities, murders, plunderings and deportations which Serbia has suffered at the enemy's hands. The whole land has been pillaged and laid waste in every meaning of those dreadful words.

Besides losing 320,000 men up to the arrival in Corfu in 1916 and some 60,000 since, Serbia has also lost one-half of her tax-paying citizens. In addition, quite a third of her population perished from starvation, epidemic, disease, and the " unprecedented savagery of the enemy at

the time of the invasion of 1914, and during the three years' domination of the Bulgars and Austro-Magyars."

Museums, libraries, universities, churches and schools have been plundered; live-stock has been driven away; forests, vineyards and orchards cut down and ruined. Agricultural implements and industrial machinery have been stolen.

M. Savchitch, former Minister of Public Works, says (January, 1919):

"So far, we know that the value of one year's harvest—and the enemy seized three—amounts to over 1,600,000,000 francs. The enemy destroyed over 130,000 horses, over 6,000,000 sheep and goats, about 2,000,000 pigs, about 1,300,000 cattle, and over 8,000,000 poultry. Manufactured goods to the value of 750,000,000 francs were taken away, or destroyed. The value of destroyed public and private buildings is estimated at 30,000,000 francs. The damage done to private property, such as furniture, movable property, tools, etc., amounts to 400,000,000 francs. The enemy carried off silver currency alone to the value of 30,000,000 francs, and jewellery to about the same value. Requisitions, enforced subscriptions to enemy war loans and the damages sustained by private financial concerns amount to 800,000,000 francs.

There are over 150,000 orphans who have lost both parents and must be provided for and educated. Pensions must also be provided for the very large number of widows and fatherless children.

All these losses sustained by Serbia during the war, according to pre-war valuation, amount to 10,000,000,000 francs, and that exclusive of the war expenses incurred by Serbia during this war and of the War Loans received from the Allies."

That is their Bill, and their Reconstruction programme cannot be better given than in the words of Prince Alexander's proclamation to his peoples. It is a document that is worth quoting in full, and the spirit it breathes is unquestionably the spirit of the Serb—the race that has suffered most in this War, but never faltered :

"*Belgrade.* January 11.

To my people, the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

Long have we waited for the union in one independent national State in which all our race shall live a full free life and enjoy without hindrance the gifts which the hand of God has so lavishly bestowed upon our fair land. The vows are fulfilled which all our generations throughout the centuries have increasingly sealed with their blood, and manifested by the

unanimous decision of the nation as expressed by the ringing voice of their best representatives. Now all the dismembered parts of our native land are united in the Unitary Kingdom, over which my august father, His Majesty King Peter, has by the will of the people been called to reign as King of all Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes. Representing the Royal authority in his name, I, in agreement with the leaders and plenipotentiaries of all Serb, Croat, and Slovene National parties, have formed our first National Government as the visible sign of our brotherhood and complete fraternal solidarity. In this Government the foremost men of all three faiths, and all three names, the representatives of all parties and all provinces of the Kingdom, will sit and work together. Our Government will work in complete harmony with the representatives of the people and be responsible to the latter for the convocation by us in Belgrade, as soon as possible, of the National Assembly, consisting of delegates from the Serbian Parliament from Old Serbia and Macedonia, of a proportionate number of members of the National Councils and the representatives of Montenegro. The National Assembly will constitute the provisional but fully authorized legislative body in our Kingdom. As King of a free and democratic nation, I shall in all matters unwaveringly uphold the principles of Constitutional Parliamentary rule, which will be the foundation stone of the State created by the

free will of the people. In this spirit and in accordance with these principles my Government will administer the country and decide all questions of external and internal politics. The Government will introduce a Franchise law, for the ordering of free elections on the basis of universal suffrage for the Constituent Assembly. This Parliament will be called upon to pass the Bill for a Democratic State Constitution in the spirit of State unity with wide local autonomies, and the safeguarding of the widest political civil liberty and rights. My Government will have the duty at once to extend to the whole Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes all rights and liberties hitherto enjoyed under the Constitution of the Kingdom of Serbia by all Serbian citizens. Hereby the complete equality before the law of all citizens of the Kingdom will be established, all class privileges abolished, and freedom and religious equality attained. It is my desire that a just solution of the agrarian problem be taken in hand at once, that serfdom be abolished and the great landed properties be broken up into small holdings for the agricultural population with equitable compensation for the former owners. Let every Serb, Croat, and Slovene be master of his own land. In our free State there must be none but free landowners. Therefore I have summoned my Government at once to appoint a Commission to draft a solution of the agrarian problem, and I call upon our patient serfs to wait quietly

and with full confidence in my Royal words, until our State gives them by constitutional methods, their land, which shall henceforth belong only to God and themselves, even as it was in Serbia of yore. All social relations have been profoundly dislocated by the four years' war. For a speedy and satisfactory clearing up of these relations, and in order that the country may return to normal conditions, my Government will devote its chief care to the food supply of the nation, more especially of the poorer classes, to the relief and support of those who have suffered from the war, to the reconstruction of our devastated and plundered country, and the establishment of regular communications by land and by sea, which is the first condition for sound economic development.

The first and foremost duty of my Government in this fateful hour will be to take special care that at the conclusion of the World Peace our frontiers are drawn in such a way that they agree truly with the ethnographic boundaries of our whole nation, so that no one part of our Kingdom may come under foreign domination. To be successful in this it is imperatively necessary that our young State should gather together and unite all its moral and material forces; it is necessary that its internal life remain strong and vigorous; wherefore I call upon all good citizens and loyal sons of our Kingdom by word, deed and example to help my Government in its efforts to go on main-

taining peace and order in the country, which is not only needful for the present, but a pledge for the future of our Kingdom.

Our noble Allies and the whole world have seen with admiration and appreciation our heroic resistance and the self-sacrifice of my army and the endurance of my people. Let us now strive to forget all our mutual controversies, and by the sinking of our differences to show the example of a sane and well-balanced nation, worthy to live and work in peace together with the great and enlightened nations, whose loyal friend and gallant Ally it had the honour to be in the war. Inspired by the example of lofty patriotism and sacrifice displayed by our army, our martyrs and public workers during the war, and mindful of the graves of our heroes, I and my Government will unceasingly and worthily care for the families of the warriors, who covered themselves with eternal glory and laid down their lives in the struggle for the realization of our great historic idea and the task of the nation. In the name of my august father and in my own, I send Royal greetings to all my people, to all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, I wish you all a Happy New Year, in which, by God's help, our glorious tricolour will be unfolded to wave proudly throughout the centuries, the symbol of our Kingdom, recognized and honoured as the splendid emblem of the indisputable sovereignty of our State in all our lands, in our hills, in all

our provinces and islands, and from one end of our blue sea to the other. Let us all inspire ourselves with a sturdy faith in the vigorous, strong and prosperous life of our Kingdom. May God and the spirit of our glorious forefathers and our great dead ever be with us. May they encourage and uphold us in to-morrow's strenuous and united labours for the prosperity and happiness of my people.

Given in our Royal Palace and our Capital of Belgrade on December 24th, 1918.

(Signed) ALEKSANDER."

Countersigned by all Ministers.

Ah me! We talk about making a land fit for heroes to live in—but these "barbarians" get busy.

The months have crept by. Our own high hopes are somewhat dashed. The Profiteers have discounted most of our Bills on the Bank of Dreams. Fed up with the war, we are now rapidly approaching the state of being fed up with the Peace. Everywhere there are delays, difficulties, complications . . . Politics.

Not for the first time the teacher might well learn a lesson from his scholar. Snubbed at the Peace Conference, this Little Nation has gone quietly on with its job, and come unscathed through yet another trying test—the fuss about Fiume. Italy has never loved the Southern

Slav. Without the least desire to stir the mud, one cannot forget a certain bombardment by the Austrians when the Italians did nothing, or the way the Serbian Army at the end of that heroic Retreat was compelled to march on again. What has the patriot-poet, D'Annunzio, to say to these things? And now—to take Fiume, the outlet Serbia has always craved, the port rightly hers, is to assume the mantle of discredited Austria, to continue the policy of repression that for generations has made the Balkans the menace of European peace.

It was simply asking for trouble. Those who knew the Serbs shuddered. But—nothing happened. Not because they were war-weary, but because they are Great, and Allies. Grimly they went on with their reconstruction, and submitted to the arbitration of the Peace Conference a question which a less fine nation would have submitted to the sword.

From start to finish—always the same. Why hide the truth? Belgium has always been written up in the Press. Belgium has all our sympathies. Belgium was fine—at first. But Serbia has been fine all through. She has suffered more and done more. She was never able to make the occupying Hun pay, as the Belgians were. Her women and children have been treated far worse. The story of her civilian and

military prisoners is unique in its sickening savagery and shame.

But who cares? Who remembers?

We want to forget. We are sick of the war and irresponsible war-books, and there are *so* many axes to grind.

Enthusiasts are wearisome, foolish people, but facts are facts. Here, to end with, is a brief summary of what the Serbians have done year by year for the Cause—not their Cause, but the world's Cause.

**1914** found the Serbians, at any rate, utterly unprepared for War. They were short of 120,000 rifles, had an average of only forty shells for their artillery, and three machine guns for every two thousand men. More than half their troops took the field in civilian clothes for lack of uniforms, and medical stores were a minus quantity.

But in August, after a seven days' campaign, they flung back an Austrian army of 200,000 men, and by September, according to an Austrian official return, the enemy losses to date were 37,647 men and 791 officers killed; 90,736 men and 2219 officers wounded; and 17,087 men and 118 officers prisoners. And this when the whole Serbian "heavy" artillery consisted of 40 small

howitzers—4 and 5 inch—and no officer commanding a battery was allowed to fire a single shot without the explicit authorization of the Divisional Commander.

In September and October, the Serbs undertook two minor offensives—one in Syria and the other with the Montenegrins in Bosnia.

In December, 1914, at Rudnik, after a ten days' terrific struggle, the Austrian second punitive expedition of 300,000 men met with a crushing defeat. The killed and wounded numbered 60,000 and 50,000 prisoners, 200 guns and large stores of material of all kinds fell into Serbian hands.

**1915.** Till September, the Austrians made no further big attack. Up till then the Serbian losses in killed and wounded were 145,000, all told; and 200,000 civilians perished in the typhus epidemic.

On September 18th, 1915, six Austrian and eleven German divisions under Mackensen attacked them on two sides. King Constantine repudiated the treaty of alliance because three months before he had promised the Kaiser to remain neutral. The Serbs knew the Bulgars were meditating an attack, but the Allies refused to believe it, and promised help which did not materialize.

In the midst of this mortal struggle with Mackensen on a 700 mile front, the Serbians were struck in the back by eight Bulgar divisions—and the retreat across Albania in winter began, that course being preferred to a shameful Peace and a desertion of the Allies.

**1916**. In the spring, rested, reorganized and refitted, the survivors left Corfu and took the field again. By November, after much hard fighting among the mountains and heavy casualties, they took Monastir and found themselves the only army in the Balkans with a decisive success to their credit.

**1917**. A year of endurance and stalemate, during which they were constantly pleading for another offensive—a year of many " demonstrations " and small engagements with a steady drain of casualties.

**1918**. Till September a period of more straining at the leash and improving of positions and pinning large forces of the enemy down ; and then, at last, the final rush—a breathless, reckless business, in which, though the lowered *moral* of the Bulgarians was undoubtedly a strong factor in the case, it was the surprising energy and resolution of the Serbs that was beyond question the chief cause of Bulgaria's capitulation at that particular moment.

That, roughly, is their record. It takes no account of large forces fighting with the Russian armies, or volunteers in France ; nor of various tempting Peace offers made by the enemy—offers which promised them practically all that they desired, but were spurned out of that loyalty to their Allies which has characterized them all through the War.

There the story must be left. The " little cars," having bumped their way over the mountains during the final advance, have carried their last loads of supplies and ammunition. Their drivers, demobilized and back with their wives and sweethearts, are discovering with a certain disappointment that the life they have returned to is very much the same as the one they left to go on Active Service. Out there they thought it was going to be different, just as they thought they were very much more " fed up " with the Balkans than they now find they really were. Life is full of surprises. They have even discovered a genuine affection for the " 'Enries," which in their hands did such wonderful things.

But—if you know any of them—ask them about the Serbs they worked for, in mud and snow, rain and sun. A bunch of grapes on a dusty day, a glass of milkless tea on a cold winter's dawn, a smile in the wet—these are

only little things. But they are the little things that count; the little things that reveal a people's soul. It is what the pauper gives away that touches every heart.

It has been a privilege to serve them.

# APPENDIX

*This is the Dream with which Private Smith solaced himself during the War—the Dream which hasn't quite come true.*

WHEN I git back to Blighty,
And Rations is no more,
I'll 'ave a time what's simply prime
Becos' we've won the War!
I've thought about it quite a lot,
And when I leave this sunburnt spot,
A programme all mapped out I've got,
Like no one's 'ad before!

I'll 'ave a Tea what *is* a Tea,
With Milk what is "Ideel" to me!
Twelve rations to one measly tin!
I won't 'arf slop the real stuff in
When I git back to Blighty!
What's more I'll sugar it meself!
The Jam can stop upon the shelf,
*I'll* scorf a pile of 'ot noo bread
On which there's proper Butter spread,
When I git back to Blighty!

When I git back to Blighty
With all me Souvenirs,
I'll meet me mates outside the gates
An' let 'em buy me beers!

For weeks I'll have a reg'lar do,
An' if my missis—good ole Loo !—
Fergits 'erself an' gives me Stoo,
I'll pull her blooming ears !

I'll kip upon a feather bed
With pillers underneath me 'ead !
Jest think of it !—I'll be between
Real pukka sheets, all white an' clean
When I git back to Blighty !
No sergeants will come nosin' round
With " Ain't you 'eard Re-valley sound ? "
It's dear ole Loo who'll waken me
By bringin' in me morning tea,
When I git back to Blighty !

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